Final Report

Audit Scotland

Independent Evaluation of the first three audits of CPPs

Rocket Science UK Ltd
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Contents

Richard Scothorne
Director
Rocket Science UK Ltd
2 Melville Street
Edinburgh EH3 7NS

T: 0131 226 4949
M: 07774 141 610
E: richard.scothorne@rocketsciencelab.co.uk

Executive Summary

Rocket Science was commissioned by Audit Scotland to carry out an independent evaluation of the first three audits of Community Planning Partnerships (Scottish Borders, Aberdeen City and North Ayrshire). In particular we were asked to examine:

- The extent to which they represented clear, evidence based assessments of strategic direction, governance and accountability, performance management and use of resources, impact and outcomes
- Whether the methodology of the audits was robust
- If there were refinements to the audit methodology and approach which would improve the impact and effectiveness of the audit
- The extent to which the Audits had succeeded in promoting and supporting the improved accountability of CPPs
- The extent to which the audits have supported improvements within the CPPs
- The success of partnership working with other scrutiny bodies
- The extent to which self-evaluation was used effectively as part of the audit.

In addition we were asked to make specific recommendations on the value of drawing in peer group members to future audit teams and how this might be done.

We have examined all the key documents and reports, interviewed senior staff and members in the three CPPs and scrutiny partners, talked to senior Audit Scotland staff and the Chair of the Accounts Commission, been involved in audit team feedback sessions and run a workshop on our findings for the audit teams.

Our conclusions are:

- The audits have proved timely and valuable. They describe the key issues around CPPs in ways which are likely to help CPPs across Scotland to look at themselves and act to enhance both their impact and their ability to describe it.

- The key messages were reported clearly and succinctly and it was useful to draw on the common themes and the wider experience of Audit Scotland (from Best Value and Community Planning audits) to produce a National Overview Report.

- The structure and logic of the approach and the methodology have been widely appreciated.

- The leadership of the overall audit process attracted praise from all those interviewed, in particular the role played by the manager of the CCP audit process.

- All the wider stakeholders expressed strong support for the process and methodology and felt that the Reports would prove valuable in helping CPPs to improve their focus, rigour and performance.

- The response to the Audit Reports by the three CPPs was mixed at draft report stage. While those that were most anxious felt more comfortable with the Final Reports there remained some misgivings about the focus and emphasis of some of the reports and the extent to which they reflected fairly on recent action and improvements.

- The CPP audits were a new kind of audit, and the discussions around the draft reports were valuable in helping to ensure that the Final Reports were felt to be fair and reasonable. These discussions will help Audit Scotland develop an effective tone for future reports.

- Audit Scotland has displayed a clear determination to learn as much as possible from the process in order to enhance future audits and maximise their value. This commission is part of a creditable transparency around this learning process which has also included an independently facilitated review of the audit teams' experience and insights.

- The timescales for the implementation of a new kind of audit were demanding. That three early audits were carried out within the timescales and to the quality achieved was a significant achievement. However, the demands of this timescale did affect a number of aspects of the audit process and the report:

    o Discussion about the scoping documents was limited.
    o The fieldwork period was relatively short and there would be benefit in extending the fieldwork period in future audits
    o The scope to take forward the audits as a genuine partnership was constrained and Audit Scotland had to provide a strong and driving lead in order to produce the reports on time.

    A more spacious process would allow the strengths of the other partners to be drawn on more fully.

- There is scope to simplify and focus the methodology to ensure greater consistency of application across future audits.

- The audit delivery teams were drawn from different teams within Audit Scotland and the balance of these teams varied between CPPs. This seemed to affect the style of engagement. Strenuous efforts were made to ensure consistency of approach but there remained scope to interpret aspects of the methodology (for example the relative significance of the Key Lines of Enquiry) in different ways and this appears to have affected the experience of individual CPPs.

- There were some mismatches between the expectations of the different 'volunteer' CPPs and the purpose and focus of the audit. These expectations influenced the response of these CPPs to the reports – with quite a variation in the perceived value of the Reports in terms of identifying the scope for improvement.

- There are issues around data and attribution that will require further thought:

  o The lack of data to enable auditors to explore progress against SOA outcomes.
  o The reasonable expectations made of CPPs against a background of a severe and prolonged economic downturn, real decreases in public sector spending and solid evidence of widening inequalities across the UK. The two aspects of this issue that the audits need to deal with are:
    ▪ Ensuring that in looking at data on actual outcomes in the areas of SOA focus there is a reasonable sense of the 'counter-factual' – that is, 'What would have happened without CPP activity?'
    ▪ The scale of impact it is reasonable to expect CPPs to make in the light of the relative balance of impact between national economic trends, national policy changes (notably welfare reform), and the CPP partners acting together on agreed priorities?
  o The lack of data in a format which allows comparison across the CPPs.
  o The difficulty of attribution of changes in data to CPP action.
  o The use of aggregate public budgets for localities. This is a useful way of conveying the scale of resources being devoted to areas and topics. There is scope to take this analysis further in future audits by exploring the practical flexibilities around these budgets (eg the very limited part of the Department for Work and Pensions' budget that can be flexed locally).
  o The exploration of effective resource use covers both capital and revenue spend. Revenue spend is mostly made up by staff costs and this highlights the fact that the main way in which CPPs can make an impact through their revenue spend is by changing the way in which staff use their time – what they do and how they do it.

- The CPP audit reports and the national overview report make clear that all the partners bear a responsibility for creating the conditions in which CPPs can succeed. Notably, the NHS and the Scottish Government are identified as having a clear role to play in helping to transform performance: the former by ensuring that the NHS play an active and committed role in each CPP and the opportunity to engage in a shift to preventative action is fully exploited; the latter by ensuring that long term approaches are taken to long term problems and that national data on deprivation and inequalities is locally comparable.

- What is clear from the reports is that without such action there remains a significant risk that the potential of CPPs to make a significant impact locally on a range of inequalities will remain unfulfilled.

- There are differences of approach and perspective which influenced the early audits:

  o The scrutiny partners have different priorities and approaches
  o The teams within Audit Scotland are familiar with different audit approaches (eg those appropriate for Best Value Audits, Performance Audits and Annual Financial Audits)
  o The different CPPs displayed different approaches to the task.

  This mix meant, in practice, that the agreed methodology was interpreted in different ways and the nature and quality of the engagement with CPPs, and the extent to which the Audit Report met expectations and proved valuable, varied between audits.

Our *recommendations for Audit Scotland* are:

- Audit Scotland should clearly signal an intent that all CPPs will be audited. On the basis of our findings we agree that it is appropriate and realistic in the first instance to roll out another 4 – 5 CPP audits over a period which ensures that the time constraints of the early audits are not repeated. These audits will evolve and Audit Scotland should make this expectation clear. They are likely over time to focus more on outcomes and less on leadership, governance and process; more on current issues and future challenges and less on the history of each CPP; they will differ according to the different priorities and challenges in each area; the lessons of the early audits will be taken on board; there will be scope to create a stronger team approach with scrutiny partners; and there will be an opportunity for Audit Scotland to offer more advance guidance (see below).

- Where appropriate and valuable this roll out should be complemented by cross CPP audits (for example, of their response to welfare reform or the way in which CPPs are tackling a specific issue which many or all of them have in common).

- Audit Scotland should provide advance guidance for all CPPs on:

  o The core aspects of future CPP audits – in other words, those aspects which will form part of all CPP audits and so allow changes over time to be identified

  o The Key Lines of Enquiry and how they will be used

  o The scope for bespoking the approach to local issues and areas which Audit Scotland and the CPP agree it would be valuable to explore and the significance of the Audit Scope document in setting out this agreement

  o The centrality of the SOA and the expectation that data will be available to audit progress against SOA indicators

  o The nature of the engagement that Audit Scotland will be seeking, what this will involve, and any preparatory work that would be useful.

- Audit Scotland should ensure clarity about the purpose, scope and focus of each CPP audit. In practice this should mean:

  o That the focus on scrutiny is clear, but with an expectation that both the process and the report will be designed to maximise the contribution to improvement.

  o That the basis for this scrutiny be built on 'risk assessment'. It may not be clear to CPPs what 'risk' means in a CPP setting and this may not be the best word to use. There is scope to be clearer here. Audit Scotland could use the growing evidence from CPP, Best Value and National Performance audits to describe the impact that CPPs can reasonably be expected to make (probably in the form of case studies). This would allow Audit Scotland to describe the risk of failing to achieve this potential – for individuals, families and communities - and the costs associated with this.

  o That the audit will focus on process, governance, use of resources and outcomes, and that the auditing of outcomes will be based on the SOA outcomes. We expect that there will be a shift over time from process and governance to outcomes: how these have been developed and the extent to which they are being achieved. This shift will depend on significant improvements in the clarity and focus of the SOAs and the availability of date to allow SOA outcomes to be monitored.

  o That the focus will be on recent and current performance and on each CPP's response to emerging challenges and risks. It would be reasonable to consider progress against the first SOAs in 2010/11 and it may be appropriate to go further back if this helps to describe the current position and trends through it. But for most CPPs we feel there will be limited value in reflecting on the longer term history since 2003.

  o That CPP audits should focus more on tracking specific actions by CPPs through to activities on the ground and exploring 'what works' and the conditions for success. In particular it would be helpful to develop a focus on:

  o The ways in which CPPs can influence the way in which staff carry out their day to day roles to transform impact, and the ways in which a 'norm' of collaborative action can be encouraged and recognised

  o The ways in which different services can work together around the needs of priority individuals or groups

  o The ways in which all services can work together around the issues and challenges of specific places (and in particular the areas of greatest deprivation).

- Audit Scotland should refine and simplify the KLOE so that it is clear where the main focus of interest lies in terms of significance and likely impact. We recommend that the KLOE should be more clearly focused on the outcomes identified and achieved by CPPs and specifically around the four issues of:

  o Analysis and prioritisation: Have the key local issues and challenges been identified and are these reflected in clear priorities, particularly around a shift from responding to symptoms to tackling causes?
  o Embedding priorities, actions and behaviours across the partnership and within each partner organisation
  o Encouraging and supporting collaborative behaviour across all staff
  o Actively managing performance against the SOA outcomes.

  These would reflect the four pillars of the Scottish Government's response to the report of the Christie Commission[1]:

  o *A decisive shift to prevention*
  o *Greater integration of public services at a local level driven by better partnership, collaboration and effective local delivery*
  o *Greater investment in the people who deliver services through enhanced workforce development and effective leadership*
  o *A sharp focus on improving performance, through greater transparency, innovation and use of digital technology.*

  In Appendix 2 we provide some initial suggestions about how the current KLOE could be edited to strengthen this focus.

- The advance publication of the KLOE will inevitably drive behaviours in some CPPs, but it is clear from our interviews that the most important and effective motivation for high performance is rooted in an appreciation of the scale of impact that effective partnership action can make. Future audits should seek opportunities to describe and convey the potential of CPPs to drive improved performance in this way.

- We have considered the option of the audits becoming joint audit reports by the scrutiny partners, with the lead shared across CPPs. This idea has some appealing aspects:

  o It would attract the support and greater commitment of some of the scrutiny partners and share the leadership load
  o It would reflect, in its joint working, the nature of CPPs
  o It would allow the CPP audits to absorb some aspects of the inspection role of some of the partners and so reduce duplication.

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[1] Renewing Scotland's Public Services, Scottish Government, 2011

We have however concluded that the audits should remain in their current form because:

- o Audit Scotland focuses on the independent scrutiny end of the spectrum of approaches from scrutiny to improvement. This means that it is an appropriate leader of the process.
- o The different statutory roles and responsibilities of the scrutiny partners might lead to methodological differences of tone and lead to a dilution of the specific focus of CPP audits.
- o The need to report to 5 different board structures would significantly delay the process of reporting and may highlight differences in terms of tone and content.

However, there is scope to adopt aspects of the 'professional dialogue' approach of partners such as Education Scotland and we believe that this would enhance mutual understanding between audit teams and CPPs.

In addition, at the Audit Scope stage it may be possible to identify areas of shared concern which would support integrated and streamlined scrutiny approaches. This could take a number of forms:

- o Identifying areas of exploration which will produce evidence which can be used by more than one partner and perhaps relate to upcoming audits.
- o Identify areas where the expertise of scrutiny partners can be brought to bear to enhance insights and add value to the report (eg HMICS and HMFSI around community safety priorities; Education Scotland around education outcome inequalities).
- o Identify local priority areas of action where joint work by audit team partners would be valuable.
- o Scrutiny partners could highlight areas where they may already have identified risks around weak partnership action.

- The audit reports highlight some significant data issues – notably around how difficult it has proved to describe performance against SOA outcomes. Audit Scotland's practical experience will be of value to The Improvement Service and the Scottish Government as appropriate actions around data inadequacies are explored in detail and as draft SOAs are assessed. This work needs to take account of macro-economic and national policy changes and the different ways in which these make themselves felt in each CPP area. For the next round of CPP Audits there are a number of changes that will be making themselves felt, including the integration of health and social care, welfare reform and the impact of Universal Credit and this should be taken into account in assessing the difference made by CPPs.

- There is strong and consistent support for the use of peers in audit teams. We recommend that this should become standard practice for future CPP audits. Audit Scotland will need to work with its partners to ensure that:

  - The role of the peer group members is clear and explicit: they should be seen as experts and advisers rather than full members of the audit team and they should not be involved in writing the report.
  - Experienced people are selected who will be credible and trusted and in a position to add value through their engagement with CPP partners (particularly if there are opportunities for more 'professional dialogue' to be built into the audit process).
  - The benefits of having these experienced peer group members are fully realised by agreeing clear guidance for the way in which they engage both with CPP staff and with the rest of the audit team.

- The audits provide an opportunity for Audit Scotland to enhance understanding about the areas where partnership action may and may not be the most appropriate way of tackling all key challenges and issues. In practice the landscape of accountability created through the SOA and partners' own plans is likely to be complex, made up of unilateral action and different kinds of working arrangements and commissioning involving one or more of the partners and other providers. There is therefore a clear distinction to be made between the fundamental significance of effective partnership action around the CPP table and the way in which action is implemented (which may or may not be best achieved through partnership action).

Our *recommendations for CPPs* are:

- CPPs should recognise the significance of the Audit Scope document and devote time and effort to ensuring that these relate to the specific issues and focus of their CPP, that expectations on both sides are realistic and accurate, and that the audit will add value through both its 'core' and 'bespoke' aspects.

- CPPs should ensure that that the CP partners appreciate the significance of the SOA as the basis for scrutiny of the partnership's performance. The SOA therefore needs clearly to reflect the agreed local challenges and issues based on thorough analysis and agreed interpretation, and set out the CPPs priorities and actions and the accountability for these actions. Specifically the SOA needs to identify the areas where the CPP will focus its own strategic partnership efforts.

1. Introduction

The significance of CPPs

Community Planning is the process by which councils and other public bodies work together, with local communities, the private and voluntary sectors, to plan and deliver better services and improve the lives of communities. By working together, public organisations can share resources and avoid duplication, coordinate their efforts on agreed priorities, and improve services for local people.

The importance of Community Planning has been recognised for many years and it has gone through a series of changes and developments since its introduction in the late 1990s. Community Planning was given a statutory basis by the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003 (the Act). Following the Act, CPPs were established in each of Scotland's 32 local authority areas. Under the Act:

- Councils have a duty to initiate, facilitate and maintain community planning
- NHS boards, the police, the fire and rescue services, and the enterprise agencies have a duty to participate in Community Planning. This duty was later extended to Regional Transport Partnerships in 2005
- CPPs are required to engage with communities, report on progress, and publish information on outcomes
- Scottish ministers, the Scottish Government and its agencies have a duty to promote and encourage community planning
- Councils can invite other bodies such as colleges, higher education institutions, business groups, voluntary organisations and community groups to take part in Community Planning, although these are not statutory partners.

The Act, and the later statutory guidance, aimed to establish community planning as the key means of leading and coordinating partnership working and initiatives at the local and neighbourhood level. Community Planning should add value by:

- Providing a local framework for joint working
- Building a culture of cooperation and trust
- Improving public services
- Making the best use of public money.

The structure of CPPs and the areas they cover vary considerably, depending on the size and geography of the council area, socio-demographic factors, the local economy and local political priorities.

Audit Scotland's national report in 2006, *'Community planning: an initial view',* highlighted the fact that there was limited evidence of impact on improving services for local communities and called on CPPs to simplify their structures and be clearer about their objectives. The introduction of Single Outcome Agreements (SOAs) in 2009/10 aimed to address these concerns, with an emphasis on outcomes and impact and a more structured approach to performance monitoring.

Despite these changes, there have continued to be concerns about the effectiveness of Community Planning and its impact. In 2011, the Christie Commission concluded that Scotland's public services needed urgent reform in order to meet the challenges of meeting increasing demands at a time of falling resources.

The Scottish Government and COSLA reviewed community planning and the Single Outcome Agreements (SOAs) in 2012. They published a joint 'Statement of Ambition', setting out expectations for community planning, and putting the community planning process at the heart of public service reform by describing the expectation that CPPs would:

- Take the lead role in integrated public services
- Identify potential problems and ways to prevent them
- Ensure continued improvement in the management and delivery of public services
- Achieve better outcomes for communities
- Provide the foundation for effective partnership working.

The Statement of Ambition is clear that significant improvements are needed in community planning to respond to the challenges of reducing public finances and increasing demand for services. This Statement of Ambition informed the design of the CPP audits in terms of identifying some of the areas of exploration.

Background to the early CPP audits

The Scottish Government asked the Accounts Commission to prepare an outline case of how external audit and inspection might support the delivery of better outcomes by Community Planning Partnerships (CPPs).

Audit Scotland worked with its scrutiny partners – Education Scotland, Care Inspectorate, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary for Scotland (HMICS), the Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR), and Healthcare Improvement Scotland – and other key stakeholders, including COSLA, SOLACE, The Improvement Service and the Scottish Government, to develop an audit framework for supporting improved performance and accountability of Community Planning Partnerships.

The audit methodology was tested in three early audits led by Audit Scotland on behalf of the Accounts Commission and Auditor General for Scotland. These audits were carried out in Aberdeen City, Scottish Borders and North Ayrshire during summer 2012 and the audit reports were published in March 2013.

At the same time a national overview report was published which drew on the common messages emerging from these three reports together with Audit Scotland's insights and conclusions drawn from its previous Best Value audit work in local government, police and fire, previous performance audits on partnership working (e.g. Community Health and Care Partnerships) and earlier national reports on Community Planning.

The early audits of CPPs aimed to assess the extent to which effective arrangements for joint working at a local level had been put in place and had a focus on individual CPP performance and impact. Specifically, by focusing on four key area (strategic direction, governance and accountability, performance management and improved outcomes and impact), the audits aimed to assess whether CPPs had made a difference at the local level.

What we were asked to do

Audit Scotland commissioned Rocket Science to carry out an independent evaluation of the effectiveness of the three early audits of Community Planning Partnerships, to identify the lessons learnt from the early audits, and to inform the review and refinement of the CPP audit approach.

The specific tasks outlined in the brief were to:

- Appraise the extent to which the three local audits have provided a clear evidence-based assessment of strategic direction, governance and accountability, performance management and use of resources, impact and outcomes.
- Gather evidence on the broader aspects of the audit process, including:
    - How robust the audit methodology was
    - What refinements might usefully be made to the audit methodology and approach to improve the impact and effectiveness of the audit
    - How well was self-evaluation addressed during the audit process
    - How successful has the new audit approach been in promoting and supporting improved accountability of CPPs
    - How effectively have the audits supported improvement within the CPPs
    - How successful was the partnership working with other scrutiny bodies
    - What did CPPS think of the process?
- Explore with audit teams, CPPs and other parties the merits or otherwise of direct peer involvement in CPP audits.
- Assess the experience of, and opportunities provided by, working jointly on the CPP audits, from the perspective of the scrutiny partners.
- Identify the extent to which any constraints were created by the audit delivery and reporting timetable set by Scottish Government, particularly the limited flexibility of these due to scheduling of other audit fieldwork and inspection commitments.
- Explore with key stakeholders how effectively the process of publicly reporting on the performance of CPPs has contributed to improved public accountability.

What we have done

The evaluation was broken down into a number of stages and completed during February - April 2013. The principal stages were:

- Desk based research to review the audit process and documentation, including the Statement of Ambition, KLOE, proposals to Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Employment and Sustainable Growth, the audit reports, and quality control and review panel papers
- In depth interviews with the three CPPs, including the Local Authority leads and other senior staff (including the Chief Executive in two Local Authorities) and a selection of CPP board members, representing health, police and further education
- In depth interviews with scrutiny partners and The Improvement Service, including Education Scotland, Scottish Government, Care Inspectorate, HMICS, and SHR
- Interviews with Audit Scotland staff, the Auditor General for Scotland and the Chair of the Accounts Commission
- Interviews with Audit Scotland staff and engagement with the Audit Scotland internal review process
- Attendance at an internal feedback workshop with the audit design an delivery teams and subsequent facilitation of a workshop with them at which we presented and discussed our findings
- Production of draft and final reports and reporting findings to Audit Scotland and the Accounts Commission.

Structure of report

- In Chapter 2 we set out the purpose, process and methodology for the audits, including the reporting and communication processes
- In Chapter 3 we outline the issues and lessons to be learnt, based on the experiences of those involved in the audits (Appendix 3)
- In Chapter 4 we explore the next steps, reflecting on how the audit methodology can be refined to add more value
- In Chapter 5 we give our conclusions on the robustness of the audit methodology and how successful it has been, and will be, in promoting and supporting improvement in CPPs
- In Chapter 6 we make recommendations on what refinements might be made to the audit methodology and approach to enhance the impact and effectiveness of future audits.

2. Purpose, process and methodology

Purpose and focus

Audit Scotland designed an audit with a specific set of characteristics and underpinning audit approach, outlined in Figure 1 below.

- It will be proportionate and risk-based, focusing local audit work where it can make a difference.

- It will consider the range and quality of local self-evaluation arrangements within the CPP.

- It will start with data, not with processes – i.e. a central focus of the audit will be on assessing whether the CPP can demonstrate that it is making a difference for the area, and improving outcomes for communities. Data will be used as the starting point for forming judgements on impact, governance, leadership behaviours and use of resources.

- Where possible, the audit will use data to drill down to wards and intermediate data zone level to identify patterns and problems – i.e. the audit will seek to identify significant inequalities of outcomes across different groups and geographical areas.

- It will be implemented in partnership with other scrutiny agencies – i.e. the audit will both draw on evidence from our scrutiny partners, and where appropriate they will be members of the audit teams undertaking the CPP audit work.

- It will involve CPP peers (i.e. senior local government, NHS, third sector, private sector, or central government representatives) in quality assurance and 'challenge' roles - peers may also be involved in audit teams if they have specific expertise that will add value to the audit process.

- It will assess how well CPPs are aligning resources towards shared goals and how well those resources are delivering Best Value.

- It will seek to support improvement. This may involve the audit team working closely with CPPs in an independent challenge role on their local improvement agenda.

- The process will promote improved accountability of CPPs through a local reporting and improvement follow-up process.

Figure 1: The CPP audit approach and characteristics [Source: Audit Scotland]

There are some important implications of this approach:

- The focusing of local audit work 'where it can make a difference' means that the scoping of each audit is important in terms of engaging with each CPP to pinpoint the focus. In other words, each audit will be different while being built around a common methodology.

- The way in which risk is defined is central to this bespoking of each audit. In the case of CPPs the main risks are to do with failure to realise the potential to prioritise effectively around local issues and challenges and to work in partnership to make the best use of resources and maximise impact. The implication of this is significant: is there clarity around the scale of difference that the CPP could make and an understanding of what it needs to do (and how) to achieve this?

- The primacy of data means that in the absence of data the focus needs to shift elsewhere – as it did with these early audits, with an emerging focus on process and governance partly driven by the difficulties faced in collecting the evidence needed to assess performance against the SOA outcomes.

- The methodology needs to create a careful balance between scrutiny and improvement.

The overall *aim* of the audit was to assess whether the CPPs had made a difference to local communities by gathering and evaluating evidence to allow Audit Scotland to answer the following four questions:

1. *Strategic direction* – has the CPP set a clear strategic direction, with clear improvement priorities, agreed by all partners, which reflect the needs of the area, and are based on effective community engagement?

2. *Governance and accountability* – does the CPP have effective governance and accountability arrangements, and is it able to demonstrate effective shared leadership which drives improved outcomes for the area?

3. *Performance management and use of resources* – has the CPP established effective performance management arrangements which are delivering performance improvements (including effective self-evaluation arrangements) and securing best use of public resources (including service integration)?

4. *Impact and outcomes* – can the CPP demonstrate that its actions are making a difference for the area and delivering improved outcomes for local people?

Audit Scotland was presented with a range of choices when deciding the purpose and focus of the audit. In terms of *purpose* the choice lay around the balance between scrutiny and improvement. There was a clear and agreed intent to focus of the work on independent scrutiny, but, in line with the approach described in Figure 1, the intention was for the process, the reporting and the communication of key messages to be done in a way which promoted improvement and supported the work of others (such as The Improvement Service and COSLA) who are supporting the improvement agenda around CPPs.

The choices for the *focus* of the audits included:

- The impact of senior leaders working together round the CPP table – in other words, 'What kind of return was gained for this investment of time and effort?'
- Scrutiny of progress against the outcomes described in the Single Outcome Agreement (SOA)
- The extent to which the CPP had followed through on any specific focus it had identified for its own efforts as part of the agreed SOA
- The extent to which the CPP had taken forward the 4 pillars of the Scottish Government's response to the Christie Commission, namely:

    o *A decisive shift towards prevention*
    o *Greater integration of public services at a local level driven by better partnership, collaboration and effective local delivery;*
    o *Greater investment in the people who deliver services through enhanced workforce development and effective leadership; and*
    o *A sharp focus on improving performance, through greater transparency, innovation and use of digital technology*

    ….which, while relatively new in terms of the history of Community Planning, had been well rehearsed in terms of guidance before this.
- The range and impact of partnership working across the organisations and the extent to which this was related to action by and the influence of the CPP.

The actual purpose included aspects of all of these. The focus was on the CPP and the extent to which it:

- Had analysed and identified the most important local issues and challenges and used these to determine the focus and priorities of partnership action
- Had ensured that this was reflected in its SOA
- Had embedded these priorities and approaches within their individual organisations
- Has ensured that it would be able to monitor and manage progress against some clear indicators of performance.

Within this the focus could have been on:

- The process and governance of the CPP
- The outcomes and impacts from CPP action.

The original intention was to strike a balance between process and governance and outcomes and impact but in practice the focus was more on process and governance than was anticipated at the outset.

There were two reasons for this:

- Once the audits were underway it became apparent that there were significant issues around process and governance and, since effective performance flows from clear and effective process and governance, so it seemed appropriate to focus the audits on the 'basics' of effective partnership action.

- It also became apparent that the ability of the audit teams to reach judgements on the progress made against SOA outcomes was compromised by data availability and weaknesses. Since this also meant that, in practice, CPPs did not have the information they needed to manage their performance this become another focus for the audits.

The process and methodology

Following a request from John Swinney, Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Employment and Sustainable Growth, to the Accounts Commission, to conduct audits of CPPs, to assess performance and support improvement, Audit Scotland agreed to design a framework for auditing CPPs in early 2012.

Audit Scotland considered a range of potential options for reporting on the CPP audit, and agreed to report the three early CPP audits as joint Section 102 (Controller of Audit) and Section 23 (Auditor General for Scotland) reports.
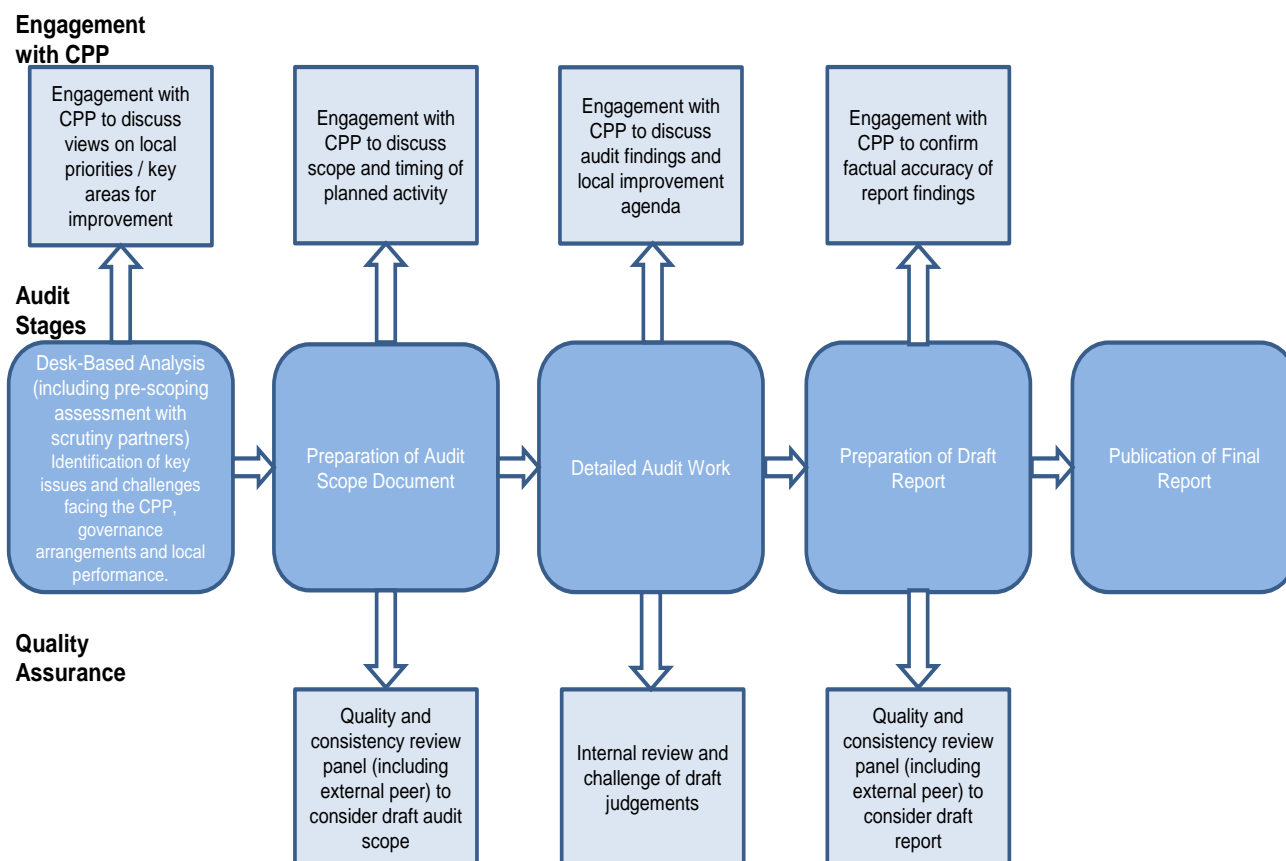
This approach was adopted to reflect the shared audit interests of the Accounts Commission and the Auditor General for Scotland in the performance of the public bodies that constitute CPPs. This model echoed the approach that had been adopted for the joint audit and inspection work in police with Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary for Scotland (HMICS).

It was intended that this approach would enable Audit Scotland to test the current accountability arrangements for CPPs, through the Controller of Audit/Accounts Commission and the Auditor General for Scotland/Scottish Parliament Public Audit Committee. The use of Section 102 reporting powers also meant that the Accounts Commission would have specific 'holding to account' powers available to it.

It was recognised that the engagement and commitment of the CPP Boards would be essential to ensure effective follow through in terms of an emerging improvement agenda, and local reporting to the CPP Boards was therefore seen as a critical part of the process.

Designing an audit process and framework

During early 2012, a design group and steering group and were established by Audit Scotland, and these groups met every 4 to 6 weeks, and designed the audit framework as well as identifying the volunteers for the three early audits. This represented a significant corporate investment for Audit Scotland. The key stages of the process are described in Figure 2 overleaf.

Engagement with CPP

| Engagement with CPP to discuss views on local priorities / key areas for improvement | Engagement with CPP to discuss scope and timing of planned activity | Engagement with CPP to discuss audit findings and local improvement agenda | Engagement with CPP to confirm factual accuracy of report findings |

Audit Stages

| Desk-Based Analysis (including pre-scoping assessment with scrutiny partners) Identification of key issues and challenges facing the CPP, governance arrangements and local performance. | Preparation of Audit Scope Document | Detailed Audit Work | Preparation of Draft Report | Publication of Final Report |

Quality Assurance

| Quality and consistency review panel (including external peer) to consider draft audit scope | Internal review and challenge of draft judgements | Quality and consistency review panel (including external peer) to consider draft report |

Figure 2: The key stages of the CPP audit process [Source: Audit Scotland]

Audit Scotland sought to develop the CPP audit in a way that reflected the changing context of public service delivery that was set out in the Statement of Ambition for community planning and SOAs, with a clear focus on place, people, partnership and performance.

Audit Scotland developed the key lines of enquiry (KLOE) which set out audit objectives and key questions for each of these themes to provide a framework for the audit work. The KLOE are attached at Appendix 1. The KLOE include 10 key questions and 92 sub questions under the four headings of vision and strategic direction; governance and accountability; use of resources and performance management; and impact and outcomes.

In June 2012 *Supporting improved performance and accountability of Community Planning Partnerships (CPPs): An Audit Framework* was approved by the Accounts Commission. This was subsequently submitted to John Swinney and Derek MacKay as the responsible Cabinet Secretaries.

Fieldwork

In summer 2012, Audit Scotland established three multi-disciplinary teams, met with the CPP Boards, and completed desk research using national and local data sources.

Scoping documents were produced for each of the three areas, and were consulted upon with the CPPs and tested at a quality and consistency review panel.

Fieldwork was completed during September 2012. This included interviews with CPP Boards and partners; observations of Board meetings and thematic groups; reviewing strategies and plans; and fieldwork focusing on particular projects and localities.

Reporting

The reporting phase for the early CPP audits included a 'hot debrief' on findings with key members of the CPP team, formal presentations to the CPP Boards, the production of a draft report which was subject to internal review and then tested at a quality and consistency review panel.

The draft report was then presented to the CPP Board for factual accuracy checking. Following a response on the draft report, a second draft report was produced, for consultation with the CPP. A final report was produced in February 2013, and presented to the Accounts Commission.

3. Issues and Lessons

Our interviews (Appendix 1) and examination of documents has led us to identify a number of issues and lessons which we explore in more detail in this Chapter. These are:

- Clarity of purpose and focus
- How the CPPs were assessed
- The KLOE and their use and interpretation
- Consistency of approach across teams
- The role and involvement of scrutiny partners
- Expectations by CPPs
- Historical vs current focus
- The timescale of the work
- Information, intelligence and attribution.

Clarity of purpose and focus

There was some confusion among the CPPs around the purpose and focus of the audits.

Each of the scoping documents is clear in setting out the purpose of the audits:

Aberdeen
- Assess of the impact of Community Planning over the past decade in improving outcomes for local communities.
- Assess the relevance of the strategic priorities of partnerships to the needs of local communities, the extent to which they are prioritised and resourced, and the extent to which they drive the work of individual partner organisations.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of local partnership leadership, governance and management arrangements in ensuring that partnerships and individual organisations are held accountable for their progress towards improving outcomes for local communities.
- Highlight areas of good practice.

North Ayrshire and Scottish Borders
- Test the effectiveness of local partnership working across agencies
- Assess how well local partnership working is integrated with strategic partnership planning
- Test the extent to which the CPP has been able to deliver well integrated local services
- Identify any national or local barriers to delivering improved outcomes
- Identify innovative or novel practices that should be reported as part of the audit.

Figure 4: Extracts from Audit Scoping Documents [Source: Audit Scotland]

Although these look different the *process* was less different than may be implied as it was built around a common set of Key Lines of Enquiry.

However, while the overall framework of the approach was the same in each area the focus did differ between areas: partly because the areas have distinctive local SOAs (related to their local situation and priorities), partly because an initial examination of outcomes suggested some areas of particular focus, and partly because Audit Scotland was keen to test variations in methodology. So, for example, in North Ayrshire Audit Scotland were keen to explore the CPP focus on the need to strengthen the economy and enhance local employment. In Aberdeen the Audit picked up the specific initiative around Total Place/Whole system and, in Scottish Borders, Audit Scotland were keen to explore the locality focus in Galashiels and Hawick as a different methodological approach.

These specific aspects were agreed with each CPP and are reflected in the Reports which as a result don't cover an identical range of topics.

There wasn't confusion about this variation, but each of the CPPs had, in retrospect, different expectations of the audit process, although all agreed that at the beginning of the process they were clear on the purpose.

Two of the CPPs were unclear as to whether the focus was on the strength of the **partnership**, the delivery of the **community planning process** and the benefits of working in that way, or on performance against the agreed **outcomes**. One CPP felt that it was clear that the focus was to cover all of these aspects and that it is not easy, or desirable, to separate them.

In practice there was some 'learning on the job' and to a certain extent this was expected as they were 'early audits'. The audit teams all identified quite early in the audit process important issues around 'the basics' of leadership, process, governance, accountability and prioritisation. At the same time they were identifying significant issues about data inadequacies against the SOA outcomes which meant that their ability to assess performance was limited. This combination meant that all the early audits focused more on process and governance and less on outcomes, impact and use of resources than initially expected.

The expectation is that in future the variation between CPP audits will be sustained – not least because performance against the SOA will form an important focus for scrutiny and the SOAs differ between Local Authorities. This means that the Audit Scope documents are important in ensuring that there is agreement about what each CPP audit is for and where it will be focusing its attention in terms of local challenges and responses.

However, this does beg some important questions about the structure and methodology of the audit process (ie what should be common and what should be locally distinctive?) and about what it will be *necessary* to focus on and what it will be *valuable* to focus upon. Our conclusion is that ensuring time is available to discuss and agree the Audit Scope document will be central to clarifying purpose, ensuring an appropriate focus and making sure that expectations are realistic.

There is one aspect of the work that will become more marked over time: namely, the extent to which a CPP audit should take into consideration effective partnership action which may not be directly linked back to the CPP. As front line staff work more and more in collaboration (around topic areas, or the needs of individuals and families, or around localities), so the importance of this will grow in terms of its contribution to partner organisations in a CPP area achieving integration, driving early intervention and enhancing performance. Over time the lack of any clear 'audit trail' from these initiatives back to the CPP may become more common – but they will be clearly contributing to the ambitions identified for CPPs.

Over time it may therefore become increasingly difficult for Audit Scotland not to take account of wider partnership action. Audit Scotland may therefore wish to take into account the achievements of these initiatives and their contribution to the achievement of the objectives of the community planning approach in addition to auditing specifically the performance of the CPP itself around leadership, governance, process and direct contribution. This would need to be clearly signalled as it could prevent some otherwise perverse behaviour (e.g. all local collaborations needing to be 'signed off' by CPPs – even retrospectively).

This raises a wider and in our view significant question: If the influence of the CPPs becomes more diffuse and harder to pin down over time, should CPP audits become audits of performance against the local SOA in order to remain focused and manageable, drawing on specific collaborative projects as case studies? The early audits have clearly majored on the need for CPPs to get 'the basics' in place: leadership, analysis, focus and priorities. As these aspects strengthen it will be easier to shift the focus onto the SOAs (i.e. outcomes) – perhaps even to the exclusion of other aspects of CPP performance (the process).

How the CPPs were assessed

The overall aim of the audits was to assess whether the CPPs had made a difference to local communities by answering the four questions about strategic direction; governance and accountability; performance management and use of resources; and impact and outcomes.

In developing their methodology, Audit Scotland developed the key lines of enquiry (KLOE) which set out audit objectives and key questions to provide a framework for the audit work. The KLOE, under the four headings provided by the key areas of the audit, include 10 key questions which are summarised overleaf. The KLOE are attached at Appendix 2.

Vision and strategic direction
- Does the CPP understand the key challenges in the local area, based on robust evidence and analysis?
- Does the CPP understand and respond effectively to the priorities and concerns of local communities'?
- Has the CPP set out clear priorities for improving local outcomes through effective partnership working
- Are partners committed to the vision and strategic direction for the CPP?
- Does the SOA reflect the CPP's agreed vision and strategic direction?

Governance and accountability
- Does the CPP have appropriate structures and processes to support effective decision-making?
- Does the CPP operate as an effective partnership Board?
- How do CPP partners embed CPP priorities and actions within their own organisations?

Use of resources
- Does the CPP know what resources are available locally?
- Has the CPP identified the full range of resources required to deliver the SOA?
- Has the CPP achieved efficiencies through redesign of services, joint procurement or sharing resources?

Performance management, impact and outcomes:
- Do CPPs have robust performance management arrangements in place to monitor measure and improve their performance?
- Do partner organisations regularly review progress against the SOA?
- Is there open and objective public performance reporting?
- What progress has the CPP made in delivering improved local outcomes?

Due to weaknesses in both performance management systems, and in alignment of resources in all CPPs, the audit focused less on 'use of resources' and 'outcomes and impact' than had originally been envisaged.

The structure of the methodology around these four questions and their comprehensive disaggregation into KLOE provided a strong 'spine' for the audits, but in practice (ie on discovering significant weaknesses in data against SOA outcomes) Audit Scotland responded quickly to ensure that the audit focused on the areas that were 'able to be audited'.

The issue we consider later is whether the current methodology, with its detailed questions (structured around the assessment of strategic direction, governance and accountability, performance management and use of resources and impact and outcomes) is appropriate for use for the roll out of the CPP audits.

The KLOE and their use and interpretation

The spine of the methodology of the audit is provided by the Key Lines of Enquiry (KLOE). The KLOE provided a clear, concise, well-structured and comprehensive framework for the audit interviews, covering every aspect of CPP activity and performance. The experience of using them on the ground has allowed us to identify two issues which suggest that there is scope to refine and apply them in future audits.

First, the individual KLOE vary significantly in their importance and status. For example, there are only two KLOE which focus on the difference made on the ground as opposed to the structures, processes, decisions, systems and leadership needed to support improvement:

> KLOE 2.3: How do CPP partners embed CPP priorities and actions within their own organisations?

> KLOE 4.4: What progress has the CPP made in delivering improved local outcomes?

If there are positive responses to all the other KLOEs it is highly likely (in a logic model) that this will work through to enhanced impact on the ground. But it is KLOE 2.3 that provides the most important link in the chain from strategic leadership to action on the ground, and KLOE 4.4 which provides the basis for reaching judgements about impact.

This suggests that the time spent on each KLOE and the significance placed on the responses should vary significantly, with more weight and time placed on those KLOE that are more directly linked to the purpose of the audit.

Second, while there was a reasonable expectation by Audit Scotland that audit team members would use the KLOE questions in a way which reflected their relative significance, in practice we came across feedback from some of those interviewed which suggested that the approach by different interviewers was not consistent. One partner reported that all the questions seemed to be given equal weighting and it "*felt like a tick box exercise*". Although it is possible that the impression given did not reflect the intent of the interviewer, there does seem to be an issue about the varying ways in which the KLOE were used and the extent to which their varied significance worked through into the time spent on them.

The KLOE have a significance which goes beyond the methodology of the audit. They convey to CCPs those aspects of CPP action and performance that are of interest to the independent scrutiny of Audit Scotland. As such they are likely to become a significant driver of CPP behaviour. Currently the range of the KLOE, combined with a lack of explicit guidance about those that are of most significance, does not convey a clear message about the most important aspects of scrutiny.

This combination of their current range and lack of distinction, and the way they are used in practice, has led us to conclude that there is scope to reduce the number of questions in the KLOE, identify the most important questions, and provide guidance to auditors about the areas to which they should devote more time.

In Appendix 2 we have suggested some possible editing that would focus the KLOE on the four key aspects of:

- Analysis and prioritisation: Have the key local issues and challenges been identified and are these reflected in clear priorities, particularly around a shift from responding to symptoms to tackling causes?
- Embedding priorities, actions and behaviours across the partnership and within each partner organisation
- Encouraging and supporting collaborative behaviour across all staff
- Actively managing performance against the SOA outcomes.

We have identified these aspects from our interviews which revealed a consensus around these features of CPPs being the most important but in practice they relate well to the four pillars of the Scottish Government's response to the Christie Commission report.

Consistency of approach across teams

Anecdotal evidence suggests that there was not a consistency of approach across the teams. A further complication is that the inconsistency is not just within the Audit Scotland teams, but also within the scrutiny partners and the CPPs themselves.

There are different approaches within Audit Scotland, and indeed within the scrutiny partners. Each of the three audits used a different composition of Audit Scotland staff and different scrutiny partners. In addition each of the CPPs took different approaches to the audits and had different expectations of them. For example, one CPP viewed the audit as a learning and developmental approach, and saw the process and outcome as very positive, while another was expecting a positive report based on significant recent progress and was disappointed by a greater than expected emphasis on a longer historical perspective.

Given that this was a new methodology, with new teams working alongside external agencies and a new audit for CPPs it is reasonable to expect that inconsistencies in approach would emerge.

It is, however, important for these inconsistencies to be minimised, and when Audit Scotland rolls out CPP Audits it is with a consistent approach.

Our analysis of the three Audit Reports themselves has identified both consistencies and differences, some of which reasonably represent the fact that the approaches were bespoked to each CPP.

All three reports are fairly consistent throughout, and follow largely the same structure. There are some differences in reporting, largely due to the availability of local information. There are also some examples that are included in one report and not in the others that may be useful to include in future audit reports.

Some of the variations include:

- In the Aberdeen report there is more of a focus on the historical context. However this was explicit in the scoping document, and is succinct and reported in a positive manner in terms of evolution and action to deal with structures that did not seem to be working well.

- In the *Context* chapter of the Aberdeen report, there is a more detailed and comprehensive data review than for the other two CPPs.

- Only the Scottish Borders report contains a separate chapter on *Strategic Direction* despite the fact that this is one of the four key areas for the audit. This is useful to include as a stand-alone section.

- The *Leadership and Governance* chapter of the Aberdeen report again contains more of a historical focus than for the other two. However this is written positively, demonstrating that the changes that needed to be made have been made.

- The *Leadership and Governance* chapter for Scottish Borders does have a more negative tone, while the North Ayrshire report is more positive, containing more examples of good practice in community planning. Scottish Borders CPP felt that they had examples that could have been used in this section.

- The *Managing Performance* chapter is equally negative in all three reports and describes similar findings. However, Scottish Borders has much less detail (2 pages) than either North Ayrshire (4 pages) or Aberdeen (5 pages).

- The *Working Together* chapter for North Ayrshire is more positive. The Aberdeen report contains more examples of good practice, written as case studies. The Scottish Borders report also contains examples of good practice, but they are not written up as case studies and contain less detail. The use of case studies, highlighted in the report in a different format, is useful.

- The *Impact and Outcomes* chapter is written in a more positive tone for North Ayrshire, and is in much more detail (14 pages, compared with 11 for Aberdeen and 8 for the Borders).

- The *Impact and Outcomes* chapter would benefit from a summary of the SOA, either within this chapter or as an appendix. It is unclear in this chapter which examples have been highlighted in the report, and why. The current SOAs are often unwieldy and contain too many targets, but future SOAs should be able to be summarised within the audit report.

- The *Improvement Agenda* chapter is brief, but consistent, in all three reports, and could usefully contain more detail.

- The overall tone of the reports does differ. In general, the Scottish Borders report is written with a more negative tone, and the North Ayrshire report is more positive. Aberdeen is perhaps the middle ground. This is largely due to person style of writing, and does not significantly change the content or messages. However, when CPPs (and particularly Local Authorities as 'facilitators') are sensitive to criticism, this has proved to be an issue. For example the *Improvement Agenda* chapter is titled *How the CPP needs to improve* in the Scottish Borders report. This is a subtle difference, but it is differences of this sort that appear to have made a difference to the way in which the reports have been received by CPP partners.

The role and involvement of scrutiny partners

The feedback we have had from all the scrutiny partners suggested that they felt their involvement had been appropriate, but for those with staff involvement (Education Scotland, The Care Inspectorate and HMICS) the quality of the partnership was challenged by the tight deadlines. In other words, Audit Scotland had to take a strong and driving lead in order to ensure the audits were delivered on time.

The approaches of the three 'lead partners' – Audit Scotland, Education Scotland and the Care Inspectorate – have evolved to the position where they have distinctive approaches to their work, with Audit Scotland focusing more on independent scrutiny and the other two focusing more strongly on inspection approaches that intrinsically promote improvement. This finds expression in the approach of Education Scotland and the Care Inspectorate to the inspection task – which in both cases tends to involve models of professional dialogue and formats which encourage constructive engagement around key challenges and issues.

The scope for audit teams to draw on this experience from Education Scotland and Care Inspectorate members in terms of creating more discursive forums was limited by the time constraints. Our impression is that, given more time, drawing on this experience would have helped to add value and gain valuable insights into where CPP partners saw themselves, the way in which they were responding to current and emerging circumstances and how they were tackling recognised areas of weakness.

Expectations by CPPs

CPPs had different expectations of the audits. This is for a number of reasons.

- Firstly, all the CPPs felt they were doing better than the audits have reported. They feel like community planning is a difficult job in difficult times, and the audits have not taken this fully into consideration. There has been a lack of guidance nationally, and partners have been difficult to engage at times. There is significant confusion over the role of the NHS in community planning.

- Secondly, there was a lack of clarity around the expectations of CPPs on the scrutiny role as opposed to the improvement agenda. CPPs expected the audit to have more of a focus on the latter.

- Finally, due to methods of reporting and accountability, Local Authorities felt that they have taken the brunt of the 'criticism', when this should have been shared equally by the partnership.

Historical vs current focus

Members of at least one of the CPPs felt frustrated by the greater than expected focus on the 10 year life of the CPP. This frustration was driven both by an appreciation that significant lessons had already been learnt that were now being applied, and by the fact that there had been a significant recent effort to transform the effectiveness of the CPP. It was felt that a stronger emphasis on this more recent period may have produced helpful insights for further improvement.

It was reasonable and helpful for the first three audits to tell the story of the first 10 years of the CPP in each of the areas and the requirement to do this had been clearly signalled. These stories helped to highlight some of the issues around structure, scale, scope and accountability which CPPs have struggled with and which lie behind current structures and focus.

It is however unlikely that it would add anything to repeat this full historical story in most future CPP audits – which are likely to show similar aspects of evolution. As a corollary, it will be most helpful to focus on the current situation, the trends through this and how CPPs are responding to current and emerging challenges and opportunities. In some cases a historical perspective may add to this. It will be important to clarify the focus of the audits in terms of timescale and the Audit Scope will be the place to do this – in practice it will relate strongly to the timescales against the outcomes set out in each CPPs SOAs.

The timescale of the work

All CPPs agreed that the timing of the audits was inconvenient, but they all also acknowledged that they knew this when they agreed to be involved in the early audits. In future, it is anticipated that CPPs will have more notice and will be able to plan CPP Board meetings around the audit.

More than one CPP felt that more time at the scoping stage would have been beneficial to the process, to improve clarity and give more time for preparations.

All CPPs agreed that the two week period for completing fieldwork was tight. One CPP felt that this was manageable, while others felt that this was to the detriment of the final report.

There were mixed views on the timescale for the reporting process. One CPP felt that this was reasonable and gave sufficient time for discussion with the CPP Board. The others felt that there was insufficient time for discussion and comment after the first draft.

Lessons from the early audits include adding more time into the scoping and the fieldwork stages. An appropriate time for fieldwork is likely to depend on:

- The ability to provide enough notice to ensure that interviews can be carried out in a complete and efficient way (matched by the prioritisation of these interviews by the partners)
- The ability of audit teams to gather preparatory material and so be well briefed for their fieldwork period
- The scale of detailed fieldwork around specific projects and localities as set out in the Audit Scope.

Information, intelligence and attribution

This is the area where the early audits have raised the most significant issues. These issues are:

- The lack of evidence about the performance of the CPPs – related to weaknesses in describing indicators of performance in each area of action and ensuring that data is available to produce and use such indicators to assess and manage performance.
- What the reasonable expectations of CPPs are, against a background of a severe and prolonged economic downturn, real decreases in public sector spending and solid evidence of widening inequalities across the UK. In other words, where can CPPs focus their time and effort in ways which can make a significant local difference in this context?
- The lack of data in a format which allows comparison across the CPPs.
- The difficulty of attribution of change in data to CPP action.
- The use of aggregated budgets figures for public sector spending in a locality which, while providing a valuable reminder of the scale of public investment, need to be carefully disaggregated to provide useful insights into the scope for local flexibility and re-alignment.

The main issue is around reasonable expectations of CPPs against a changing and challenging macro-economic background. The three aspects of this issue that the audits need to deal with are:

- Ensuring that in looking at data on actual outcomes in the areas of SOA focus there is a reasonable sense of the 'counter-factual' – that is, what would have happened without CPP activity? Audit Scotland may want to consider the way they have developed such approaches in other work, particularly in terms of cross CPP comparison where they have different priorities.

- The scale of impact it is reasonable to expect CPPs to make in the light of the relative balance of impact between national economic trends, national policy changes (notably welfare reform), and the CPP partners acting together on agreed priorities?

- The lack of evidence that was identified in all the audits serves to emphasise the significance of the SOAs as documents which lend themselves easily to rigorous auditing, and to ensure that they are clear about the precise role and focus of the CPP in their implementation. The role of the CPP is likely to be twofold:

  o Providing strategic overview and scrutiny in terms of implementation – which may be by individual CPP members or various combinations of CPP members

  o Being clear about the specific areas where the CPP feels that it can add value in ways which cannot be achieved by other organisations or groupings.

Because of this lack of evidence, the audit teams did not have an opportunity to interrogate and explore the data and apply techniques that would help to pinpoint the difference made by a CPP.

Part of this approach would need to involve taking into account the macro-economic context. There is growing evidence at the UK level of the significant increase in inequality over recent years, for example:

"Excluding the mitigating effects of the welfare state, via taxes and transfers on income, inequality has increased by more over the past three years to the end of 2010 than in the previous twelve. Tax-benefit systems, reinforced by fiscal stimulus policies, were able to absorb most of this impact and alleviate some of the pain. But, as the economic and especially the jobs crisis persist and fiscal consolidation takes hold, there is a growing risk that the most vulnerable in society will be hit harder as the cost of the crisis increases." [Crisis squeezes income and puts pressure on inequality and poverty, OECD, 2013]

"Prior to 2010, wages for workers in the bottom half stagnated but household incomes in this group were propped up by growing tax credits. With the retrenchment of public spending in full swing, tax credits now make a smaller but still highly significant contribution to income for these families and their contribution is likely to continue to decline over future years." [Source: Squeezed Britain 2013, Resolution Foundation, 2013].

What these research findings make clear is that the macro-economic context and UK policy context has had a very significant impact on the nature of inequalities and other changes over the last few years. In addition, it is also clear that the significance of this impact will continue.

Some of these impacts are likely to work through to some of the other topics that the CPP audits focus upon, though others (like crime and disorder rates) appear to be bucking a previous relationship with economic cycles. This context is therefore pertinent to the roll out of the CPP audits, in terms of assessing performance against indicators, in measuring the 'counter-factual', and in assessing attribution to the actions of the CPP.

The use of aggregate budgets for the partners is a useful way of conveying the scale of resources being devoted to areas and topics. However, there are currently low levels of understanding and activity in this area. There will be scope in future audits to take this analysis further by exploring the practical flexibilities around these budgets (eg the very limited part of the Department for Work and Pensions' budget that can be flexed locally).

In addition, the aggregate figures disguise an important truth, which is that in the public service most of the revenue budgets are spent on staff (and much of the rest is used to buy the time of others). This is important in a CPP context as it highlights the fact that one of the main ways in which CPPs can make an impact is by changing the way in which staff use their time – what they do and how they do it. It would be valuable for future CPP audits to provide some insights into the extent to which CPPs have been able to make an impact through a focus on changing what staff do and how they do it.

A risk based approach to CPP audits

The CPP audit approach (Figure 1 on page 13) included being risk based as a key characteristic. Our work has led us to question what 'risk' means in a CPP context and whether risk is the right word to use. It does need to mean something different from the financial risk and the 'risk of bad things happening' that characterise its use in other audits (notably annual audits).

Our conclusion is that the main 'risk' around CPPs is a failure to fully realise the difference that could be achieved by the effective use of intelligence, its shared interpretation and collaborative action on the issues and priorities identified in this way. The lack of evidence of community benefit from CPP action that was identified in all three audits does not mean that it cannot (or hasn't) been achieved, and it is important that there is a clear sense around CPP tables of the risks involved in failing to achieve the potential of the arrangement, which could involve poorer educational, health, community safety and employment outcomes.

It was clear from our interviews that there were dedicated individuals in the audited CPPs whose motivation for active engagement in the CPP process was driven by their firm belief that this was the best way of delivering transformed services for the public. They were clear that the early intervention and collaboration that could be achieved through this partnership working could significantly change outcomes (and help them perform well against their own performance indicators).

This focus and determination can be enhanced through CPP audits, and Audit Scotland may want to make sure that they are identifying good practice in terms of transformed outcomes through CPP action that will provide motivation for other partnerships. The clearer that future audits can describe the potential impact of CPPs the more likely it is that other CPPs will be aware of the cost of not realising this potential.

Risk, therefore, in the context of CPPs is about the likelihood of a CPP not realising the potential impact on individuals, families, communities and the public purse. This risk can be articulated by describing as clearly as possible the achievements of CPPs and making the costs of poor partnership performance more transparent.

Questions arising

Our work has raised a number of questions which we set out in Appendix 4 to prompt discussion around the nature and scope of future CPP audits.

4. Conclusions

Our conclusions in terms of the questions asked of the brief are as follows. At the end we answer an additional question: To what extent and in what form should CPP audits be rolled out across the other CPPs?

The extent to which the CPP Audits represented clear, evidence based assessments of strategic direction, governance and accountability, performance management and use of resources, impact and outcomes?

On the basis of our interviews and reading of the reports the audits present clear evidence based assessments of the current position of the CPPs in each area:

- *Strategic direction, governance and accountability*: The reports set out clearly justified statements about the current strategic direction, governance and accountability issues around the CPPs.

- *Performance management*: One of the main issues identified by the Audits is the limited evidence that is available to show that community planning has had a major impact on people living in the respective areas. The Reports highlight the fact that this means that the scope of the CPPs to manage and describe their performance has been limited. In particular the Audits have highlighted the inadequacy of the SOAs in terms of:

    o Establishing priorities for action which are clearly related to local issues and challenges based on a transparent 'audit trail' of data.
    o Related to this, identifying indicators which can be used to assess progress against the SOA and the active management of performance.

- *The use of resources, impact and outcomes*: Audit Scotland recognises that there is scope further to develop the approach that has been designed for these audits. Issues are identified about the need to be able to trace CPP actions through to impact and outcomes on the ground. The need to align resources around agreed priorities is also clearly signalled. There is scope for future audits to take the discussion further in two particular areas:

    o The use of 'headline figures' for total area spend is helpful in conveying the scale of public sector investment. This could be taken further by identifying the parts of these budgets which are potentially capable of realignment or transfer. For example, the largest single contributor to the overall sum in each area is the Department for Work and Pensions. More than half of the DWP budget in each area is devoted to pension payments and much of the rest to working age tax credits. While it could be argued that the latter suggests that action on supporting progression in work would lead to savings, the relevance of this budget to CPPs is limited as most of it is committed to personal payments. Audit Scotland may therefore wish to build on this analysis in future audits.

- Building on the fact that most of the revenue budgets of the partners are committed to staff and so what staff do and how they do it is critical to achieving change. That is, much of joining up and realigning revenue budgets is about making changes to what staff do (and how they do it) on a day to day basis.

Was the methodology of the audits robust?

On the whole the methodology of the audits proved robust, and it has allowed conclusions to be drawn with confidence. The methodology was certainly robust enough to ensure that conclusions could be drawn confidently about the need to get 'the basics' right: namely, intelligence, priorities, focus, accountabilities and performance management. We have been able to identify areas for improvement which we set out below.

Are there refinements to the audit methodology and approach which would improve the impact and effectiveness of the audit?

We have identified four areas for refinement:

- Emphasising the significance of the Audit Scope document and ensuring that CPPs recognise that this is a very important document. CPPs need to be clear about their understanding and interpretation of it – both in terms of what it contains and what it doesn't contain, and the expected balance between different parts of it. Despite the clarity of these documents it is clear in at least 2 of the 3 early audits that a mismatch between expectations of the audit and its reality can be traced back to different appreciations of this document. The Audit Scope is also the place where the distinctive aspects of each CPP audit will be described alongside the 'core elements' that will be covered by every audit. The specific role and contribution of scrutiny partners could also be described in this document.

- Simplifying the KLOE so that they focus on the most important aspects of CPPs, they relate more closely to the local scoping, and there is a consistent interpretation of their different order of significance. In particular the early audits suggest placing particular emphasis on:

  - The use of intelligence to create a clear and shared understanding of the key issues facing the CPP and their causes and drawing on this to identify priorities.
  - The ability of the CPP to pinpoint those areas where it uniquely can make a difference.
  - The extent to which the CPP is embedding priorities and partnership practices throughout their respective organisations and providing staff with the skills, space and recognition they need to act effectively.
  - The ability to track CPP generated activity through to action on the ground, the difference that it aims to make and the use of data to describe this.

- In the analysis of data, it would be helpful to start with the more specific actions of each CPP and follow this through to action on the ground, rather than focusing on generic data on key inequalities and attempting to relate this to the success (or otherwise) of the CPP.

- In part, the previous point is about a more explicit recognition of the extent to which CPPs can make an impact on issues such as inequalities compared with the difference made by macro-economic changes and (for the future) the impact of major policy changes such as welfare reform and the introduction of Universal Credit.

To what extent have the Audits had succeeded in promoting and supporting improved accountability of CPPs?

The Audits present a balanced assessment of where responsibility lies in terms of realising the improved accountability of CPPs. In particular, the Audits set out clearly:

- The need for all CPP partners to take ownership of the CPP agenda rather than relying on the leadership of the Local Authority
- The need in particular for the NHS to play a more active role
- The need for the Scottish Government to develop long term approaches to long term problems and to ensure that national data on deprivation and inequalities is locally comparable.

To what extent have the audits supported improvements within the CPPs?

The difference that the Audit will make to CPP improvement in each area varies significantly in terms of the extent to which the Audit was considered to provide new perspectives and raise issues that the CPP had not yet acted upon. It also depended on the approach to the audit taken by each Local Authority. One of the CPPs saw the audit as a way of helping them improve so they were keen to learn as much from it as possible and covert these lessons into action. Another felt that their extensive recent (pre-audit) work to transform their CPP and its impact had already identified most of the key issues.

In the event the greater impact on improvement has almost certainly been among other CPPs which have yet to be audited but know they will be. Anecdotally there is evidence that the Reports – and notably the National Overview Report – have been widely read and absorbed. Future CPP audits will be able to identify the scale and scope of the improvements triggered by these audits and their findings.

How successful was partnership working with other scrutiny bodies?

The joint teams appear to have worked well but it is clear that the time constraints limited the extent to which it was able to ensure that the process felt like partnership working. While the scrutiny partners all felt that they had been involved in an appropriate way, and some had provided staff as members of the audit teams, genuine teamwork was limited and the scope for staff to draw on each other's expertise and process experience was constrained by time.

However, it is clear that the partners have a lot to offer each other in terms of engagement approaches and topic expertise and experience and there are significant opportunities to work together in ways that are more joined up.

- This could take a number of forms:
    - o Identifying areas of exploration which will produce evidence which can be used by more than one partner and perhaps relate to upcoming audits.
    - o Identify areas where the expertise of scrutiny partners can be brought to bear to enhance insights and add value to the report (eg HMICS and HMFSI around community safety priorities; Education Scotland around education outcome inequalities).
    - o Identify local priority areas of action where joint work by audit team partners would be valuable.
    - o Scrutiny partners could highlight areas where they may already have identified risks around weak partnership action.

To what extent was self-evaluation was used effectively as part of the audit?

The use of self-evaluation was patchy and depended on the local production of self-evaluations that were relevant to the task, which turned out to be limited. In no area was the product of self-evaluation significant to the methodology or conclusions. However, where this has been done thoroughly on the basis of, for example, the Improvement Service self-evaluation tool, it was clearly of value and Audit Scotland may want to actively encourage the use of this.

To what extent and in what form should CPP audits be rolled out across the other CPPs?

The stakeholders we interviewed were clear in their view that the existence of an audit of CPPs would be a driver of improvement, and this improvement would be supported by a range of other work currently in hand. This is particularly true in the light of the significance placed on CPPs as key drivers of the public service reform agenda and the fact that the first three CPPs have identified some important issues around the basics of leadership, governance and prioritisation and an absence of evidence for impact.

We therefore conclude that the first three CPP audits have reinforced the need to signal an intention to roll out these audits to the other CPPs.

However, it is clear that the audits are likely to evolve over time – and that they will vary by CPP according to their local challenges and priorities. Their evolution is likely to be influenced by a number of factors:

- The first three audits and the national overview report are likely to have an impact by identifying some current weaknesses and driving a focus on these.

- The guidance offered by Audit Scotland is also likely to drive improvement action and so over time lead to shifts of emphasis – from governance, process and prioritisation to outcomes and from CPP history to current issues and emerging challenges.

- Over time there is likely to be more collaborative action on the ground that is driven by growing staff appreciation of how to enhance impact and may not link clearly and directly back to CPP decisions. This may drive a stronger focus of the audits on SOA outcomes rather than attempting to focus solely on partnership action that can be tracked back to CPP decisions.

Our conclusion is that a clear intent to roll out CPP audits should be accompanied by an explicit appreciation that they will evolve significantly over time and vary in their focus from place to place.

5. Recommendations

On the basis of our evaluation work we have identified a range of recommendations. These focus on recommendations for Audit Scotland in rolling out a programme of CPP audits, but there are some associated recommendations for CPPs.

Our *recommendations for Audit Scotland* are:

- Audit Scotland should clearly signal an intent that all CPPs will be audited. On the basis of our findings we agree that it is appropriate and realistic in the first instance to roll out another 4 – 5 CPP audits over a period which ensures that the time constraints of the early audits are not repeated. These audits will evolve and Audit Scotland should make this expectation clear. They are likely over time to focus more on outcomes and less on leadership, governance and process and more on current issues and future challenges and less on the history of each CPP; they will differ according to the different priorities and challenges in each area; the lessons of the early audits will be taken on board; there will be scope to create a stronger team approach with scrutiny partners; and there will be an opportunity for Audit Scotland to offer more advance guidance (see below).

- Where appropriate and valuable this roll out should be complemented by cross CPP audits (for example, of their response to welfare reform or the way in which CPPs are tackling a specific issue which many or all of them have in common).

- Audit Scotland should provide advance guidance for all CPPs on:

  o The core aspects of future CPP audits – in other words, those aspects which will form part of all CPP audits and so allow changes over time to be identified

  o The Key Lines of Enquiry and how they will be used

  o The scope for bespoking the approach to local issues and areas which Audit Scotland and the CPP agree it would be valuable to explore and the significance of the Audit Scope document in setting out this agreement.

  o The centrality of the SOA and the expectation that data will be available to audit progress against SOA indicators..

  o The nature of the engagement that Audit Scotland will be seeking, what this will involve and any preparatory work that would be useful.

- Audit Scotland should ensure clarity about the purpose, scope and focus of each CPP audit. In practice this should mean:

  o That the focus on scrutiny is clear, but with an expectation that both the process and the report will be designed to maximise the contribution to improvement.

o   That the basis for this scrutiny be built on 'risk assessment'. It may not be clear to CPPs what 'risk' means in a CPP setting and this may not be the best word to use. There is scope to be clearer here. Audit Scotland could use the growing evidence from CPP, Best Value and National Performance audits to describe the impact that CPPs can reasonably be expected to make (probably in the form of case studies). This would allow Audit Scotland to describe the risk of failing to achieve this potential – for individuals, families and communities and the costs associated with this.

o   That the audit will focus on process, governance, use of resources and outcomes, and that the auditing of outcomes will be based on the SOA outcomes. We expect that there will be a shift over time from process and governance to outcomes: how these have been developed and the extent to which they are being achieved. This shift will depend on significant improvements in the clarity and focus of the SOAs and the availability of date to allow SOA outcomes to be monitored.

o   That the focus will be on recent and current performance and on each CPP's response to emerging challenges and risks. It would be reasonable to consider progress against the first SOAs in 2010/11 and it may be appropriate to go further back if this helps to describe the current position and trends through it. But for most CPPs we feel there will be limited value in reflecting on the longer term history since 2003.

o   That CPP audits should focus more on tracking specific actions by CPPs through to activities on the ground and exploring 'what works' and the conditions for success. In particular it would be helpful to develop a focus on:

   ▪   The ways in which CPPs can influence the way in which staff carry out their day to day roles to transform impact, and the ways in which a 'default' of collaborative action can be encouraged and recognised

   ▪   The ways in which different services can work together around the needs of priority individuals or groups

   ▪   The ways in which all services can work together around the issues and challenges of specific places (and in particular the areas of greatest deprivation).

●   Audit Scotland should refine and simplify the KLOE so that it is clear where the main focus of interest lies in terms of significance and likely impact. Specifically we recommend that the KLOE should be more clearly focused on the outcomes identified and achieved by CPPs and specifically around the four issues of:

   o   Analysis and prioritisation: Have the key local issues and challenges been identified and are these reflected in clear priorities, particularly around a shift from responding to symptoms to tackling causes?
   o   Embedding priorities, actions and behaviours across the partnership and within each partner organisation
   o   Encouraging and supporting collaborative behaviour across all staff.

- Actively managing performance against the SOA outcomes

These would reflect the four pillars of the Scottish Government's response to the report of the Christie Commission[2]:

- *A decisive shift to prevention*
- *Greater integration of public services at a local level driven by better partnership, collaboration and effective local delivery*
- *Greater investment in the people who deliver services through enhanced workforce development and effective leadership*
- *A sharp focus on improving performance, through greater transparency, innovation and use of digital technology.*

In Appendix 2 we provide some initial suggestions about how the current KLOE could be edited to strengthen this focus.

- The advance publication of the KLOE will inevitably drive behaviours in some CPPs, but it is clear that the most important and effective motivation for high performance is rooted in an appreciation of the scale of impact that effective partnership action can make. Future audits should seek opportunities to describe and convey the potential of CPPs to drive improved performance in this way.

- We have considered the option of the audits becoming joint audit reports by the scrutiny partners, with the lead shared across CPPs. This idea has some appealing aspects:

  - It would attract the support and greater commitment of some of the scrutiny partners and share the leadership load
  - It would reflect, in its joint working, the nature of CPPs
  - It would allow the CPP audits to absorb some aspects of the inspection role of some of the partners and so reduce duplication.

We have however concluded that the audits should remain in their current form because:

  - Audit Scotland focuses on the independent scrutiny end of the spectrum of approaches from scrutiny to improvement. This means that it is an appropriate leader of the process.
  - The different statutory roles and responsibilities of the scrutiny partners might lead to methodological differences of tone and lead to a dilution of the specific focus of CPP audits.
  - The need to report to 5 different board structures would significantly delay the process of reporting and may highlight differences in terms of tone and content.

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[2] Renewing Scotland's Public Services, Scottish Government, 2011

However, there is scope to adopt aspects of the 'professional dialogue' approach of partners such as Education Scotland and we believe that this would enhance mutual understanding between audit teams and CPPs.

In addition, at the Audit Scope stage it may be possible to identify areas of shared concern which would support integrated and streamlined scrutiny approaches. This could take a number of forms:

- o Identifying areas of exploration which will produce evidence which can be used by more than one partner and perhaps relate to upcoming audits.
- o Identify areas where the expertise of scrutiny partners can be brought to bear to enhance insights and add value to the report (eg HMICS and HMFSI around community safety priorities; Education Scotland around education outcome inequalities).
- o Identify local priority areas of action where joint work by audit team partners would be valuable.
- o Scrutiny partners could highlight areas where they may already have identified risks around weak partnership action.

- The audit reports highlight some significant data issues – notably around how difficult it has proved to describe performance against SOA outcomes. Audit Scotland's practical experience will be of value to The Improvement Service and the Scottish Government as appropriate actions around data inadequacies are explored in detail and as draft SOAs are assessed. This work needs to take account of macro-economic and national policy changes and the different ways in which these make themselves felt in each CPP area. For the next round of CPP Audits there are a number of changes that will be making themselves felt, including the integration of health and social care, welfare reform and the impact of Universal Credit and this will need to be taken into account in assessing the difference made by CPPs.

- There is strong and consistent support for the use of peers in audit teams and we recommend that this should become standard practice for future CPP audits. There is a need for Audit Scotland to work with its partners to ensure that:

  - o The role of the peer group members is clear and explicit: they should be seen as experts and advisers rather than full members of the audit team and they should not be involved in writing the report.
  - o Experienced people are selected who will be credible and trusted and in a position to add value through their engagement with CPP partners (particularly if there are opportunities for more 'professional dialogue' to be built into the audit process).
  - o The benefits of having these experienced peer group members are fully realised by agreeing clear guidance for the way in which they engage both with CPP staff and with the rest of the audit team.

- The audits provide an opportunity for Audit Scotland to enhance understanding about the areas where partnership action may and may not be the most appropriate way of tackling all key challenges and issues. In practice the landscape of accountability created through the SOA and partner's own plans is likely to be complex, made up of unilateral action and different kinds of working arrangements and commissioning involving one or more of the partners and other providers. There is therefore a clear distinction to be made between the fundamental significance of effective partnership action around the CPP table and the way in which action is implemented (which may or may not be best achieved through partnership action).

Our *recommendations for CPPs* are:

- CPPs should recognise the significance of the Audit Scope document and devote time and effort to ensuring that these relate to the specific issues and focus of their CPP, that expectations on both sides are realistic and accurate, and that the audit will add value through both its 'core' and 'bespoke' aspects.

- CPPs should ensure that that the CP partners appreciate the significance of the SOA as the basis for scrutiny of the partnership's performance. The SOA therefore needs clearly to reflect the agreed local challenges and issues based on thorough analysis and agreed interpretation, and set out the CPPs priorities and actions and the accountability for these actions. Specifically the SOA needs to identify the areas where the CPP will focus its own strategic partnership efforts.

Appendix 1: Interviews

Elma Murray	Chief Executive, North Ayrshire Council
Morna Rae	Acting Policy and Performance Officer, North Ayrshire Council
Amanda Coultard	Assistant Director, Planning, NHS North Ayrshire and Arran
Tracey Logan	Chief Executive, Scottish Borders Council
Shona Smith	Project and Change Manager, Scottish Borders Council
David Cressey	Head of Housing, Scottish Borders Council
Calum Campbell	Chief Executive, NHS Borders
Stewart Carruth	Director of Corporate Governance, Aberdeen City Council
Martin Murchie	Community Planning and Corporate Performance Manager, Aberdeen City Council
Adrian Watson	Local Police Commander for Aberdeen City Division
Cllr Barney Crockett	Leaders of Aberdeen City Council
Annette Bruton	Chief Executive, Care Inspectorate
Alistair Delaney	Education Scotland
Lesley Brown	Education Scotland
Pete Hamilton	Education Scotland
Laura-Ann Currie	Education Scotland
Steven Torrie	HM Chief Inspector of Scottish Fife and Rescue Service
Michael Cameron	Chief Executive, Scottish Housing Regulator
Richard Rollinson	Scottish Government
Ian Davidson	Scottish Government
Colin Mair	Chief Executive, The Improvement Service
Adam Stewart	COSLA
John Baillie	Chair of the Accounts Commission
Caroline Gardner	Auditor General for Scotland
Fraser McKinley	Controller of Audit
Antony Clark	Assistant Director, Best Value and Scrutiny Improvement, Audit Scotland

Appendix 2: Key Lines of Enquiry (KLOE)

In this Appendix we have started with the published KLOE and identified possible ways of focusing them more clearly on the three areas of:

- Analysis and prioritisation (have the key local issues and challenges been identified and are these reflected in clear priorities)
- Embedding priorities, actions and behaviours across the partnership and within each partner organisation
- Managing performance.

These areas have emerged from the work to date as central to the effectiveness of the CPPs.

We have been guided in this editing task by the following principles:

- Removing duplication
- Removing 'checklist' questions (ie questions which appear to check if a CPP does something which may or may not make a difference to achievement)
- Removing unnecessary questions (ie about actions which must have been taken to produce positive responses elsewhere)
- Removed any inappropriate focus on partnership action (eg questions which imply that partnership action is the way to respond to specific issues – as opposed to unilateral action or action by two or more partners)
- Strengthening the focus of questioning on the identification of action and effective management of implementation and change, rather than specifically on how this management happens.
- Creating a stronger focus on aspects of CPP activity which are likely to have a strong influence on outcomes.

Text highlighted in red could be removed and help to ensure a more focused set of questions
Text in italics has been added (or moved from elsewhere).

Vision and strategic direction – To assess whether the CPP has a clear strategic direction, agreed by all partners, which reflects the needs of the local area.

	Key Questions		Sub Questions	Audit Methodologies
1.1	Does Has the CPP understand identified the key challenges in the local area, based on robust evidence and analysis?	1.1.1	Has the CPP robustly analysed available local and national data to identify the key challenges facing the area? *Do these reflect the priorities and concerns of local communities?* *Do these reflect a shared interpretation of the data?* How comprehensive was the analysis? For example, did it cover differences over time, was it broken down by different population groups, e.g. older people, did it identify differences in different areas within the CPP boundary? To what extent are inequalities within the community identified? Has the CPP made full use of different partners' data sources and expertise in data analysis? Are the key challenges in the local area reflected in the community plan/SOA?	Document review • Community Plan/SOA content review • CPP agenda, reports and minute analysis Data analysis • Scottish Government stats • HMIE/CI/SHR stats • KPIs • Local and national citizen satisfaction data Interviews • CPP Chair/CPP Partners/CPP Manager • Community and third sector reps
1.2	Does the CPP understand and respond effectively to the priorities and concerns of local communities'?	1.2.1	How does the CPP seek to understand the needs and concerns of local communities? Is there evidence that the views of local people have informed the CPP's priorities and plans? How joined-up is the CPP in its engagement with local communities? Has consultation and community engagement by individual CPP partners influenced the CPP's priorities and plans? How does the CPP communicate its plans to local people? What happens to any feedback? Are the CPPs plans easily accessible by the public?	Document review • Community Plan/SOA content review • CPP agenda, reports and minute analysis • CPP reports of work with local people Data analysis • Local and national citizen satisfaction data Interviews • CPP Chair/CPP Partners • CPP Manager • Community and third sector reps

	Key Questions		Sub Questions	Audit Methodologies
				Potential pilot work with local citizens
1.3	Has the CPP *used this analysis to identify* set out clear priorities for improving local outcomes through effective partnership working?	1.3.1	Have CPP partners *considered the key challenges in the local area and agreed the allocation of responsibility for achieving specific outcome improvements, including* agreed where they can work together to improve outcomes? Specifically have partners agreed where they can: • deliver progress in addressing gaps in outcomes for specific groups and across the local authority area? • deliver better use of public resources, for example through reducing unnecessary use of resources? • Improve joint working to deliver better outcomes for local people? Has it established clear, time specific targets for service delivery and improvement which will chart progress towards agreed outcomes? Do the agreed priorities reflect the key challenges of the area identified through the data analysis and community engagement?	Document review • CPP reports • CPP Agenda analysis • CPP Minute review Interviews • CPP Chair • CPP Partners
	To what extent has the CPP prioritised early intervention and prevention approaches to reduce local outcome gaps, between populations and across the area?			
1.4	Are partners committed to the vision and strategic direction for the CPP?	1.4.1	Are leaders from partner organisations committed to the vision for the CPP? • Do leaders of partner organisations routinely attend relevant CPP meetings? • Do leaders take an active part in agreeing, monitoring and taking action to improve local services?	Document review • CPP reports • CPP Agenda analysis • CPP Minute review Interviews • CPP Chair • CPP Partners • Leaders from a selection of

	Key Questions		Sub Questions	Audit Methodologies
			• Have partners discussed and agreed their respective roles and responsibilities in relation to the CPP and delivery of the SOA?	partner agencies
1.5	Does the SOA reflect the CPP's agreed *priorities* vision and strategic direction?	1.5.1	Has the CPP agreed a set of clear and unambiguous local outcomes and priorities which reflect the CPP's overall vision for the area? Do the outcomes agreed reflect the issues highlighted by the CPP's data analysis and engagement with local communities? Is there evidence of innovative thinking to identify ways to achieve desired outcomes? Does the SOA contain clear, time specific targets for service delivery and improvement against which can be used to track progress towards outcomes over time? Are the long-term improvements in outcomes that the CPP is seeking to achieve over the next decade (as set out in the Community Plan/SOA) supported by *well justified* intermediate outcomes, indicators and targets against which progress can be measured in the short and medium term? What is the basis for specific long-term and intermediate outcomes – how were particular percentage improvements arrived at? How difficult will they be to achieve?	Document review • Strategic Plan • CPP reports • CPP Agenda analysis • CPP Minute review • Partners Strategic Plans Interviews • CPP Chair • CPP Partners

Governance and accountability – To assess whether CPP governance and accountability arrangements are appropriate and allow them to improve outcomes for local people.

	Key Questions		Sub Questions	Audit Methodologies
2.1	Does the CPP have appropriate structures and processes to support effective decision-making?	2.1.1	How is the CPP structured and is the rationale for the approach clearly set out? • Has there been a review of the structures recently, what was the reason for this and has it resulted in improvements? • Are local governance and accountability arrangements, clear, effective and understood by all partners? • Is there effective political engagement and leadership within the CPP structure(s)? • Does the CPP have a clear process for managing and monitoring risks?	Document review • Decision-making structures • Membership and terms of key CPP groups (Board, sub-groups, etc.) • CPP Agenda analysis • CPP Minute review Interviews • CPP Chair • CPP Partners
		2.1.2	Are roles and responsibilities clearly set out? (including delegation, decision making, lines of accountability) • Where are decisions typically made (e.g. at board level, or by the executive group)? • Are decisions by theme groups approved by the board? How does this work?	Document review • Schemes of delegation • Job descriptions • Relevant protocols and MoUs • CPP minutes Interviews • CPP Chair • CPP Partners
2.2	Does the CPP operate as an effective partnership Board?	2.2.1	Do CPP meetings work effectively? i.e. is there good attendance from key people, with a clear focus on delivering change and improvement? Is there evidence of collective and shared responsibility for achieving outcomes? Is there evidence of clear decision making by the CPP?	Document review • Decision-making structures • Membership and terms of key CPP groups (Board, sub-groups, etc.) • CPP Agenda analysis • CPP Minute review

				Do partners consider that attending CPP meetings is a worthwhile use of their time?	Interviews and observations
				Have CPP partners considered the value added by the CPP? Both to the local area and to their own body?	
				Does the CPP have effective arrangements to evaluate its own performance as a partnership board?	
2.3	How do CPP partners embed CPP priorities, and actions *and collaborative behaviours* within their own organisations?	2.3.1		Are the specific contributions of individual partners clearly stated in the SOA and properly reflected in their own key plans and strategies?	Document review - Strategic Plan - CPP reports - CPP Agenda analysis - CPP Minute review - Partners Strategic Plans Interviews - CPP Chair - CPP Partners
				Is there evidence of each partner acting to encourage and support effective collaborative behaviours to and embedding this in staff appraisals.	
				Are there clear links between the CPP's SOA, supporting action plans and partner bodies' internal or departmental action plans?	
				Does this include the identification of specific services and activities which will contribute to the time-specific performance targets set out in the community plan/SOA?	
				Are agreed local outcomes reflected in all related local partnership plans? (e.g. integrated Children's Services Plan, Community Safety strategy, Local Economic Development Plan, etc.)	
				Has the CPP clearly set out how CPP actions and priorities link to any regional planning initiatives?	

Use of resources – To examine how CPPs manage resources and what contribution they are making to improving the efficiency and effectiveness of local resources.

		Key Questions		Sub Questions	Audit Methodologies
3.1		Does the CPP know what resources are available locally? *Has the CPP identified the full range of local resources and how these can be used to achieve enhanced outcomes in the identified priority areas?*	3.1.1	Has the CPP undertaken any work to identify *identified the full range of resources and* assets being deployed locally *and how these can be better focused and aligned to deal with the challenges they have identified*? *Is the SOA/Community Plan clear about the resources that have been aligned/committed to agreed SOA outcomes?*	Document review • Financial reports and plans • Minutes of CPP Board Interviews
			3.1.2	Has the CPP identified the other resources (financial, staff) different partners are spending locally? Does the CPP know what proportion of 'mainstream' local public resources could be available to the CPP? Does the CPP understand the costs of local services and activities that are contributing towards agreed local outcomes, and do budgets properly provide for those costs? To what extent have partners identified and prioritised the skills required for effective partnership working within their senior and middle management?	Document review • Financial reports and plans • Minutes of CPP Board • Job descriptions of senior managers Interviews
3.2		Has the CPP identified the full range of resources required to deliver the SOA?	3.2.1	What funding arrangements are there to support delivery of the SOA? For example, have different partners aligned their budgets in relation to the outcomes they are contributing to? Is the SOA/Community Plan clear about the resources that have been aligned/committed to agreed SOA	Document review • Financial reports and plans • Minutes of CPP Board Interviews • CPP manager

	Key Questions		Sub Questions	Audit Methodologies
			outcomes?	Survey to CPP
			How much specific funding has been allocated by partners to support the delivery of local outcomes?	
			What external funding, if any, has the CPP secured to support the delivery of local outcomes?	
			What has been the impact of reducing budgets on plans to deliver the SOA? Has the CPP revised the SOA as a result of reductions in partner budgets?	
3.3	Has the CPP achieved efficiencies through redesign of services, joint procurement or sharing resources?	3.3.1	Is there evidence that the CPP has reviewed how available resources are used to deliver improved outcomes and what impact the investment had made? o Does the CPP have plans to improve value for money? o Does the CPP benchmark information on cost and activity with other CPPs? Is there evidence that CPP partners have pooled or integrated budgets to deliver outcomes? o Is it clear why this has been done and have the expected benefits been achieved? (e.g. easier to redesign services) Is there clear evidence of shared posts and integrated service models which have been introduced by, or are under the influence of, the CPP? Has the CPP assessed the costs and benefits of changing how resources are used, including external procurement, sharing of budgets, staff, premises and equipment? o Is there evidence that this has led to benefits? (financial and improved outcomes?)	Document review • Financial reports and plans • Minutes of CPP Board Interviews • CPP manager Survey to CPP Case studies of good practice

Performance management, impact and outcomes – To assess how effectively CPPs manage performance and what difference they are making to people in the local area.

	Key Questions		Sub Questions	Audit Methodologies
4.1	Do CPPs have robust performance management arrangements in place to monitor, measure and improve their performance?	4.1.1	How does the CPP manage performance? Are CPPs' arrangements aligned with partners' performance management arrangements? Is performance systematically reported and discussed at CPP committees? What happens to performance reports? i.e. what action is taken when outcomes are not being achieved? • Do performance reports aid effective decision-making? Are the reports accurate, complete, timely, relevant, user friendly? • Does the CPP collectively hold individual partners to account for their performance and contribution to the SOA? Is there evidence that as a result of discussions about performance against the SOA, necessary actions are identified and reported to partners?	Document review: • CPP performance reports • Partners' performance reports • CPP minutes Interviews Meeting observations
4.2	Do partner organisations regularly review progress against the SOA?	4.2.1	How often do partner agencies consider SOAs? • Are CPP performance reports (SOA performance issues) routinely considered by the boards of CPP partners? ○ Do CPP partners routinely discuss performance and agree actions to address areas of poor performance within their own organisations? ○ Is there evidence that partners take appropriate action if relevant outcomes are not being achieved?	Document review Interviews and observations
4.3	Is there open and	4.3.1	Does the CPP report publicly on its performance?	Document review

	Key Questions		Sub Questions	Audit Methodologies
	objective public performance reporting?		• Does this include plans to improve areas of poor performance? • Is this reporting transparent, accurate and easily understandable? • Do CPPs report on value for money? Do CPP performance reports tell a clear and persuasive picture about what difference the CPP is making to improving the lives of local people? Is community engagement and the views of local people effectively embedded in the PPR process? Has the CPP adopted any innovative approaches to how it reports its performance to the public?	Interviews
4.4	What progress has the CPP made in delivering improved local outcomes?	4.4.1	Has the CPP made progress against the targets and objectives contained within the Community Plan and SOA? How does the CPP's performance compare with other similar CPP areas? What progress has the CPP made in closing the gap around inequalities in outcomes within its own area? Is there early evidence that the CPP's actions around early intervention and prevention are having an impact? What improvements has the CPP delivered which could not have been delivered by individual bodies? Can the CPP demonstrate what contribution it has made towards the Scottish Government's five Strategic Objectives and sixteen national outcomes?	Document review • Community Plan/SOA content review • CPP agenda, reports and minute analysis • CPP annual SOA report to SG Data analysis • Scottish Government stats • HMIE/CI/SHR stats • KPIs • Local and national citizen satisfaction data Interviews • CPP Chair/CPP Partners • CPP Manager • Community and third sector reps Potential pilot work with local citizens

Appendix 3: The experience of those involved

The experience of the CPPs

There were significant variations in the experience of the CPPs during the audit. This section outlines some of the comments from the CPPs, both from local authority staff and partner agencies.

Overall experience of the process

- CPPs felt that the process and methodology was well structured and clear.

- One CPP said the process was demanding, but they were appropriately involved in every stage and the process felt clear and logical. The auditors were flexible and were open to suggestion for additional interviewees and projects to visit. *"I anticipated that it would involve a lot of work, and it did."*

- A member of a partner agency reported that she had been involved in all of the internal CPP discussions and had also been interviewed. She thought the process was well organised and well structured.

- One CPP reported that they view audit and inspection as a tool for improvement, and felt that the auditors understood this, and that it is reflected in the tone of the report. They reported that it felt like a two way process, which was very beneficial to the CPP. They prepared a lot of information in advance and, although time was tight, they involved partners in the planning and preparation.

Responses to the audit report

- One CPP felt that the findings were fair and agreed with the areas for improvement. There were a couple of areas where *"we felt we were not as bad as the report suggests"*. They reported that the first draft was very difficult, as it appeared negative in places and some of the content that should have been included wasn't. However, the CPP and audit teams had good discussions, and an iterative process led to a final report that they were generally happy with.

- Two CPPs expressed concerns about the first drafts of their reports. Both felt that the leadership and engagement shown by Audit Scotland following the first draft was very good and both felt that their Final Reports were significantly improved as a result. One now feels that, although they don't consider that the final report is a good reflection of their CPPs achievements, it is a firm basis for improvement and in this respect is very valuable. It will feed into the improvement plan, SOA and corporate plan. They are taking it very seriously, and it is particularly helpful in the areas where they agree that there is a weakness. The other CPP now feel comfortable with the final report though feel it retains a focus on the history of the CPP rather than on more recent efforts to transform CPP performance. They felt they had recently devoted a lot of time to identifying appropriate action and little was added to this by the audit process.

- One CPP reported that the report had *"a negative spin to it"* and while they agreed with much of the content, the way in which it was presented was unhelpful.

- In general terms Local Authorities had been more anxious about the draft reports than other partners – which may be a reflection of the very clear sense of ownership of the CPPs which they displayed.

Expectations of the Audit

- CPPs felt that the audit was more demanding and rigorous than they had expected.

- One CPP reported that more partners were interviewed than they had anticipated, and the auditors attended more sub groups than they had expected. The CPP felt that this led to the auditors having a comprehensive overview of the CPP. The initial list of interviewees was much shorter, but the audit team were very flexible and willing to interview more partners.

- One CPP reported that the process matched expectations, but they would have liked to give more examples of effective local partnership action *("community planning in practice")* and demonstrate a wider range of projects where they felt they were making a difference.

- One CPP reported that they felt, in retrospect, that the purpose of the audit was vague. It was unclear if it was partnership working, community planning or the performance against outcomes that was being audited.

- One CPP would have liked to see the audit spending more time on following through specific areas of action and exploring what it meant in practice to join up and align budgets around priorities to achieve enhanced outcomes. They felt that since it was so difficult to attribute change on the ground to CPP action it would have been better to devote the time to 'drilling down' into particular partnership initiatives and projects.

Evidence-based assessments

- One CPP reported that the audit produced evidenced based assessments that were fair, and were what the CPP were expecting. There were no surprises.

- One CPP felt that there was unreasonable criticism of their proposed governance structure. As there are no examples of good practice in CPP governance, it was felt that this was an unfair judgement that was not based on evidence. The proposed governance structure was what CPP partners had wanted to see implemented.

- In some areas of activity this CPP struggled to find suitable evidence for the audit, and as a result there were some activities that were not included in the report. They offered two explanations for this. Firstly, that the CPPs weren't anticipating an audit, and so hadn't been ensuring that evidence that would be suitable for an audit was being collected. Secondly, there are significant areas of work that happen outwith the CPP structure, but are *"very good examples of community planning in practice"*.

- One CPP was disappointed that some good examples of partnership working weren't used in the report, as there wasn't *"acceptable evidence"* of this being generated within the CPP. This particular CPP reported that they had spent time *"getting on and doing the job"* and hadn't spent as much time on the processes and evidence collection as was needed. They felt that there was too much of an emphasis on "audit type" evidence. This reflects a wider issue about the lack of 'audit trails' leading back from partnership action on the ground to specific CPP decisions and actions.

- Another CPP felt that using the Statement of Ambition as the basis for the assessment was unreasonable, *"a retrospective adoption of an aspiration"*, although the Scottish Government is clear that the Statement reflects long standing guidance to CPPs.

- One partner felt that too much weight was placed upon minutes of CPP meetings as evidence, and that, *"the influence of the CPP is much wider than just the formal meetings"*. Their view was that much activity that goes on that is not 'badged' as a CPP group, because community planning is embedded in everyone's roles on a day to day basis.

- CPPs felt that getting *"the right kind of evidence"* was very important, and that this was an area that was new for everyone involved. It was agreed that this was because they were 'early audits' and it would become clearer and easier for other CPPs to prepare for future CPP audits.

- All CPPs agreed that the assessment of performance management is accurate and that this is an area of weakness in all three areas.

- All CPPs agreed that 'use of resources' is a very difficult area to deliver successfully. While there are examples of joint budget planning and some alignment of budgets, this is an area that the CPPs are still fully to tackle.

The extent to which the audits worked equally with each partner

- One CPP felt that the audit team worked with all CPP partners: perhaps not equally with all partners, but it was felt that the interviews, meetings and visits were well balanced.

- One CPP reported that the timescales made it difficult properly to brief the partners on the process. Another reported that the partners did not have any concerns, and felt that they didn't need a formal briefing.

- One CPP felt that Audit Scotland reporting that it was "Council dominated" and "Council centric" was based on a misunderstanding. Council representatives felt that their role is essential in both fulfilling their statutory obligation to lead and co-ordinate the CPP. This CPP felt that the description of their CPP as "Council centric" was fair but was by necessity not by design.

- One partner felt that the CPP partners weren't all involved equally, but this was as it should be. Not all organisations were involved in the CPP to the same extent and the audit involved partners in a way that was appropriate and proportionate.

- One CPP reported that they had underestimated the readiness of partner agencies to be involved in a CPP audit, and that briefing and preparation with frontline staff interviewed as part of the fieldwork would have been beneficial.

- One CPP felt that it was critical to ensure that all partners in the CPP understood the importance of the audit, and the implications for their own organisations, and they needed to be willing to take action on the recommended areas for improvement.

The use of self-evaluation

- One CPP had done partnership health checks with the Improvement Service. These documents were made available to the auditors and were reflected in the report.

- One CPP said that self-evaluation (self-assessment) as a means of preparing for the audit would have been a useful process to go through, as the audit was a new experience for many of the partners involved. If Audit Scotland had given an outline of a process, the CPP could have prepared an evidence base, and used this as a means of briefing partners. However, there was insufficient time (between agreeing on the scope of the audit and the fieldwork commencing) for this to happen.

Supporting improvement

- Two of the CPPs agreed that the reports had been, and would be, critical in supporting the improvement agenda. This is for a number of reasons, including the fact that they provide an evidence base around the areas for improvement that the CPPs had already identified, give credibility to the CPP improvement agenda, provide leverage over partners and make recommendations for improvement. One CPP felt that the 'improvement' section of the report could have gone further, and they would have liked to see an improvement plan developed as part of the auditing process.

- The other CPP felt that they had previously identified the main points for improvement and had them in hand so the Report did not add significant value.

The benefits of the audit

- The CPPs reported many benefits of the process, including how the process of preparing for the audit helped in the development of the SOA.

- The areas for improvement weren't a surprise, but gave an evidence base, and credibility, for discussions with partners, as well as leverage to make changes.

- The audit confirmed the view that CPPs were weak on performance management, and this was an area that they recognised needed immediate attention.

- One CPP reported that all partners were involved, by Audit Scotland, in the discussions around the audit report, and this gave a clear message of shared ownership and accountability. This was a very important aspect of the process for them.

- One CPP said that the way that the report had been written had enabled the Council to have conversations with CPP partners, and had provided evidence on the areas for improvement, even though nothing came as a surprise.

- One CPP describe the audit as a "*positive, constructive experience*", a learning experience and part of the journey to strengthen the CPP. They said that it was a privilege to be involved in the development of the CPP audit process.

- While more comfortable with the final report two of the CPPs had felt unhappy with the draft report, and felt that it was not an accurate or fair reflection of the partnership. Despite this, an unexpected benefit for one CPP was that the audit united the CPP Board, as they were all equally unhappy with the final report. One of these CPPs felt that, given their recent efforts to transform CPP performance a greater emphasis on the current situation would have been more likely to provide useful insights.

Publicly reporting on CPP performance

- All CPPs felt that information is already made publicly available, so publicly reporting hasn't made a difference at a local level.

- At a national level, one stakeholder reported that she was disappointed by the lack of interest in community planning from the media.

- All CPPs agreed that the national overview report was very helpful. CPPs were pleased to see that the national overview report also contained recommendations, and challenges, to the Scottish Government and National Community Planning Group, and felt that their roles in community planning were critical.

The delivery and reporting timetable

- Again, there were mixed views on the timetable. It was felt by all that the timescale was challenging for the fieldwork, and a substantial amount of work was completed within an intensive two week period. However one CPP felt that the audit team were very flexible and additional interviews were completed over an additional 4 week period. In another CPP, there were individuals that could not be interviewed as they were not available within the two week period, and there was limited flexibility in arranging interviews at a later date.

- One CPP reported that the timing of the audit "*wasn't great*", as there were other significant areas of work going on at the same time. However, all CPPs were clear that they had volunteered as an early audit, and that the issue of timing would be easily remedied in the future, when CPP audits are rolled out.

- One CPP felt that the timetable for reporting and consultation on the report was appropriate, and the face to face meeting with the Audit Scotland team worked very well. They felt it would have been very useful to schedule in meetings for the CPP Board, for updates and feedback, in advance of the audit starting. The CPP Board meetings are agreed a year in advance, so this was not possible for the early audits.

- Another CPP felt that the fieldwork was too short and there wasn't enough time built in for consultation on the draft report. CPP Boards meet only every 2 or 3 months, and this made it difficult to discuss the reports at a full Board.

- One CPP reported that during the Best Value 2 audits, the fieldwork was completed over a longer time frame and the auditors stayed on site throughout. It was felt that this would also be helpful for the CPP audit. The CPP audit had all fieldwork completed within two weeks, and this felt "*crammed*" and was described as "*quick and dirty*". It was felt that a 6 week period for fieldwork would be more reasonable, and would ensure that all senior staff were interviewed.

- One CPP reported that the timing was challenging, but was manageable.

Suggested changes, developments or improvements to the audit process

- More than one CPP felt that the timing of the audit was not ideal. More advance notice would have been helpful. Also, more notice to enable more preparation for the audit would have been very useful, as would more time to comment on the draft report.

- One CPP reported that they were happy with the scoping document at the time, but in retrospect would have a more detailed discussion about the scope of the audit. They felt the scoping document was too generic, the CPP didn't understand the type of evidence that would be required and didn't have enough time for preparation. They would like the Audit Scope to specify in more detail which areas of activity would be considered by the audit.

- It was felt that there were many opportunities to combine inspections within Local Authorities in the future, to ensure a better use of resources.

- One CPP commented that the audit felt proportionate in approach, and this should not change if the process is changed and refined.

- In retrospect, the CPPs felt that they needed to allocate more resources to preparing for the audit, and had perhaps underestimated the amount of time and energy that would be required.

- It was felt that there was more of a focus on the strength of partnership, structure and processes and much less so on outcomes. In the future, as CPPs and SOAs develop, there should be more emphasis on outcomes.

The Key Lines of Enquiry (KLOE)

- CPPs felt that the KLOE were not perfect, "*but there probably isn't a perfect model*" and they expected that they would be refined and improved in time. One CPP stated that the KLOE helped interviews to get to the root of the issues, and they were aware that this was a pilot, and a developmental process.

National, regional and local issues

- All CPPs felt that the draft reports did not have a sufficient awareness of the national constraints faced by CPPs. The CPPs described the blockages and barriers that can prevent a CPP from delivering effectively and felt that these were not recognised. One CPP said it felt like they were "*being measured against a bar that had been set unreasonably high*" and that "*distance travelled*" and "*direction of travel*" wasn't taken sufficiently into account.

- One CPP felt that there was not enough of an understanding of some of the national constraints in the final report. All CPP described the difficulty in engaging some partners. For example the NHS has historically been difficult to engage, but one CPP felt that this had improved as a result of the Statement of Ambition, more so than the CPP audit. One CPP reported that, across Scotland, CPPs have had difficulties in engaging partners such as the NHS. If the Council did not take a leading role in the CPP it would not happen. It was felt that there wasn't sufficient understanding of this shown in the report.

- One CPP discussed the involvement of the NHS in CPPs and felt that there were contradictory messages from the Scottish Government around accountability of the NHS. It was felt that this was reasonably reflected in the national overview report.

- One partner described how, in 2003, the Scottish Government didn't want to be too prescriptive in how CPPs were established and managed. This had led to a lack of guidance, and, "…now there are no recognised models of good practice; for example, what is a good CPP governance structure?"

- In all the areas police and fire and rescue were going through single force arrangements, and there had been uncertainty about how they would operate in the future. This may have had an impact on the lack of clarity around roles and governance.

Community engagement

- One CPP reported that community engagement was discussed with a range of partners, including VCS representatives, and the auditors got a range of views, but perhaps not an 'overview' at a CPP level.

- It was felt by all CPPs that the community engagement part of the audit was weak, and didn't go into as much detail as might have been possible. The process for this part of the audit was less well defined than others.

- One CPP said that community engagement was "*covered reasonable well*", but it felt like "*a bit of a light touch*". It is "*a very difficult thing to measure, and there is lots going on and it isn't all badged as Community Planning*".

- One partner said that community engagement was explored in enough detail, but in future this area of the audit will need to be developed and strengthened. It feels that currently CPPs "*don't know what good community engagement looks like*", although there are pockets of good practice.

- One CPP reported that they could have given many more examples of community engagement activity, but it was not possible to demonstrate this fully within the two weeks of fieldwork. However, despite this, all CPPs felt that the views in the reports on community engagement were a fair reflection of current practice.

- In North Ayrshire, the CPP Board approved a community engagement strategy in December 2012, and, due to timing of the audit, this work was not able to be included in the report.

Involvement of scrutiny partners and peer involvement

- It was felt by one CPP that the scrutiny partners were not used to auditing or inspecting *partnerships*, and therefore had less of an understanding of how partnerships worked in practice. Involvement of peers from other CPPs would be useful in contributing these insights.

- One CPP felt that the scrutiny partners were not visible in the process. They also felt that the use of CPP peers would be worthwhile, as this would give the audit team a better understanding of the reality of working in a CPP.

- All CPPs and partner agencies felt that involving CPP peers in the audit team would be invaluable.

- In North Ayrshire the Universal Children's Services Inspection was shortly after the CPP audit. This had meant that the partners had been better prepared, as a result of the CPP audit and the involvement of Education Scotland in it.

Roll-out of the CPP audit process

- Interviewees felt that with the new SOA guidance, CPPs will be all doing reviews and self-assessments, and the audit could usefully link into this. In general, CPPs feel that the audit is of benefit, and it has been well received by the network.

- One CPP stated that careful consideration needs to be given to the CPP audit, and how this fits with Best Value audits. One CPP would be happy to have CPP audits in place of BV audits, as this would give legitimacy to Community Planning, and they felt this would be a natural progression.

The experience of the scrutiny partners

The experience of the scrutiny partners varied significantly because the nature and scale of their respective engagement varied widely, mainly because of the current role and focus of their organisation.

All the scrutiny bodies felt that for the early audits the scale and nature of their involvement was appropriate. So for example the Scottish Housing Regulator felt that their marginal involvement was entirely appropriate given their current role and focus.

Education Scotland, the Care Inspectorate and HMICS had a more substantial involvement with staff involved in the audit teams. Their view was that the nature of their involvement had been determined both by the timescales involved – which required strong leadership by Audit Scotland to meet delivery targets – and by the focus of the methodology on independent scrutiny rather than (during the audit process) improvement.

Education Scotland expressed interest in principle in moving to joint reporting (with the leadership of individual reports being shared out across scrutiny partners) and felt that the scrutiny focus did not allow them to contribute fully from their improvement focused approach. There was, in their view, scope for the form of engagement with the CPPs to be structured around professional dialogue, exploring in an open and constructive way current issues, learning and scope for enhancing performance.

Appendix 4: Questions

Our work has raised a number of questions which we set out here as a way of prompting discussion about the nature and scope of future CPP audits:

- *Are CPPs designed to drive change or to coordinate activities?*
- *What can a partnership of strategic leaders focus on that will make a difference in ways that no organisation or other grouping can do better?*
- *What are CPPs good at doing – and what should they leave others to do?*
- *What do CPPs need to do to fulfil their role effectively?*
- *Why does so much effective partnership action happen outside the ambit of CPPs?*
- *Is 'Community Planning' about the work of the CPP or about the benefits of a culture of partnership (that can be engendered by a CPP)?*
- *What are we learning about effective engagement with communities as part of Community Planning?*
- *What is proving the most effective way of 'joining up' services – around client groups, topics or localities?*
- *Is there a shared understanding and belief about the scale of the difference that CPPs can make – and is there a shared ambition to realise the potential?*
- *How can CPPs best manage the transition between dealing with symptoms and focusing on causes?*
- *Is there a shared understanding about the pivotal role of some key services such as housing, employability and economic development?*
- *On the basis of the findings, how different do CPPs need to be to contribute effectively?*
- *If resources are people, what does this mean for how CPPs ensure impact?*
- *How can Audit Scotland CPP audits help to contribute to clarifying the key requirements for systematic and sustainable change?*